LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 18
SEPTEMBER 2018
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MICK ROCK
Shooting Bowie, Iggy & Lou Reed

LET'S EAT GRANDMA
"We're different people to when we wrote the first record"

PULP
Inside their Britpop game-changer

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Thirty years of Surfer Rosa

Black Francis, Joey Santiago and Vaughan Oliver lift the lid on the making of a timeless classic

Deluxe Edition
REVIEWED

ON THE ROAD WITH RYLEY WALKER

SMALL FACES
"WE MADE A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH..."

THE MAGAZINE FOR VINYL LOVERS

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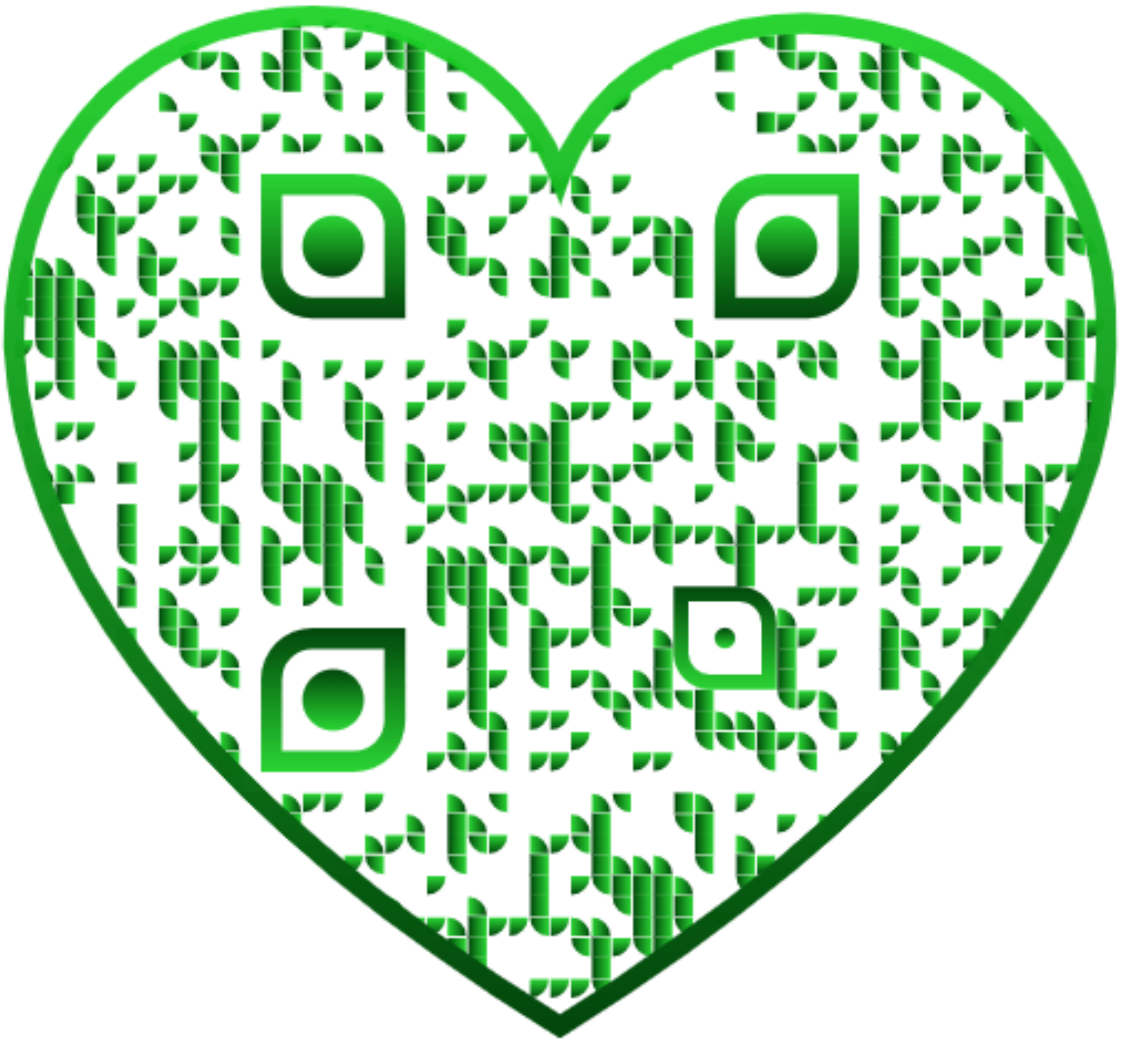

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by bel canto

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- Ken Kessler

Bel Canto e.One PHONO Review
Hi-Fi News June 2018

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Welcome...

No less a judge of musical and cultural importance than David Bowie once drew a parallel between The Velvet Underground and this month's cover stars, Pixies, noting that while neither "sold many records… everyone that bought a Velvet Underground album formed a band."

"I have to suggest that the same thing applied to the Pixies," he continued. "Once you heard them, you wanted to have a band just like them." Kurt Cobain, Courtney Love, Billy Corgan, PJ Harvey and Thom Yorke all concurred, crediting 4AD's Boston four-piece with drawing up the quiet-loud blueprint that inspired them to form their own bands, and fuelled the rise of grunge at the end of the 80s. If that proves to be the legacy of Pixies and their somehow ageless debut album *Surfer Rosa*, which turned 30 this year, then it's a potent one.

This month, we were privileged to sit down with Black Francis, Joey Santiago and the creative duo behind the album's artwork, Vaughan Oliver and Simon Larbalestier, to discuss the making of one of the most influential albums of the 80s – perhaps one of the most influential indie-rock albums ever recorded. Starting on p38, Francis and Santiago take time out from their latest world tour to recall the scenes inside the Q Division Studios where, with Steve Albini's hands on the controls, they carved out their dark, Lynchian masterpiece *Surfer Rosa* in just 10 days.

With Steve Albini's hands on the controls, they carved out their dark, Lynchian masterpiece

Elsewhere this issue, we meet a pioneering musical duo at the opposite end of their career timeline – teenagers Jenny Hollingworth and Rosa Walton, aka Let's Eat Grandma – as they talk us through making *I'm All Ears*, the exceptional follow-up to their 2016 debut album, *I, Gemini*. Laura Barton goes on the road with Chicago guitar virtuoso Ryley Walker, who treated us to a new record of his own, *Deafman Glance*, in May, and we pay tribute to another album celebrating an anniversary this year – 1968's *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* by the Small Faces, the latest title to receive BMG's Art Of The Album deluxe reissue treatment.

Photographer Mick Rock tells us about his remarkable career, shooting thousands of images of David Bowie, Lou Reed, Mick Jagger and Debbie Harry, to name but a few – turn to p54 for his unique story. Our Classic Album is Pulp's *Different Class*, perhaps the record from the Britpop era that has survived the rigours of time the best, and The Trip negotiates the canals and cafés of Amsterdam on a cratedigging marathon of no fewer than 19 Dutch record shops.

Finally, if you enjoy reading *Long Live Vinyl* and don't want to miss future issues, turn to p68 for some amazing subscription deals, which start from just £3 for three copies. Thanks for reading.

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

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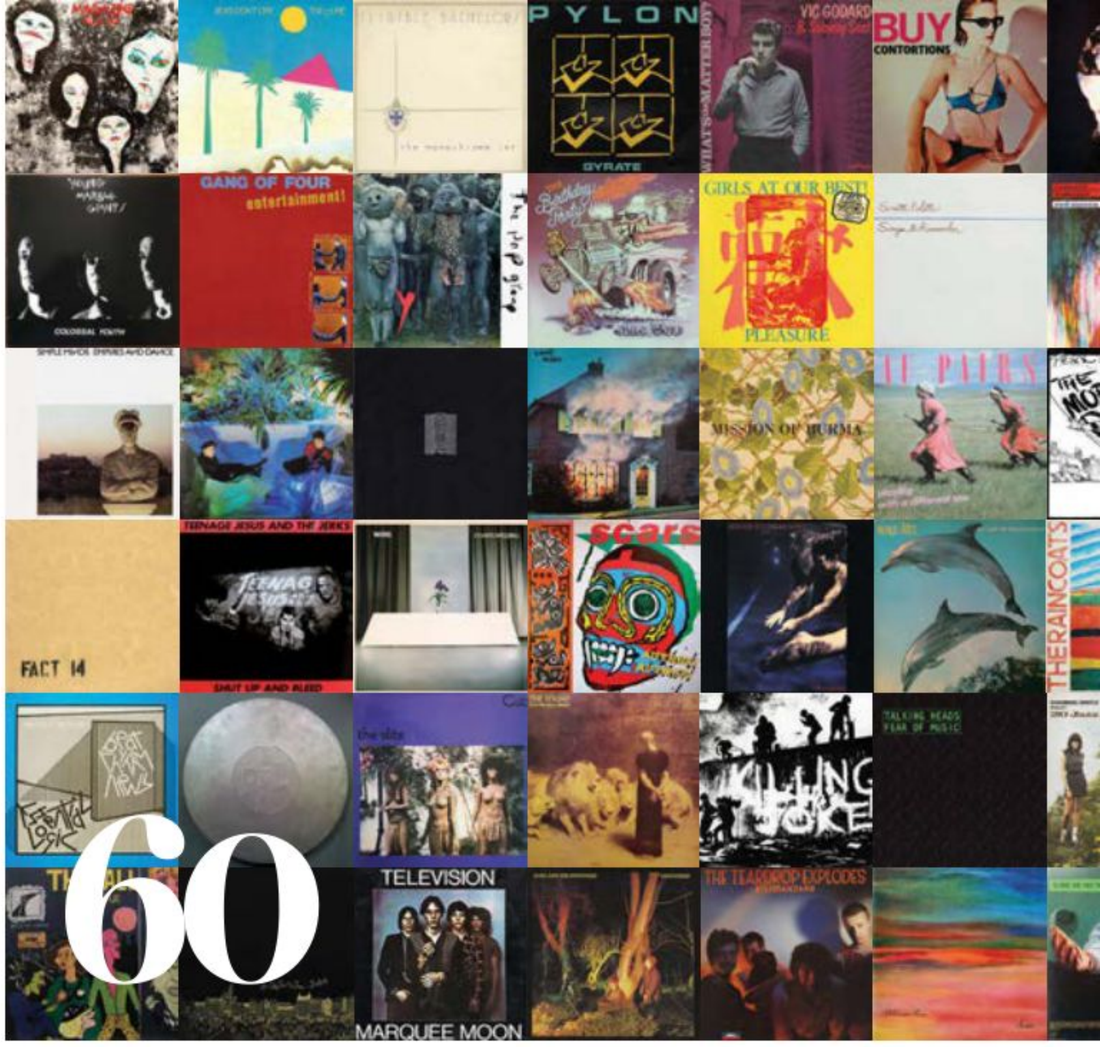

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LONG LIVE VINYL

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite 4AD releases...

Gary Walker
Boxer
The National

Owen Bailey
Halcyon Digest
Deerhunter

Jonny Highett
Hips & Makers
Kristin Hersh

Andy Cottle
Star
Belly

Ian Peel
Sloppy Heart
Frazier Chorus

Meet our expert contributors...

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Gary Tipp
Gary has been collecting vinyl since time immemorial and still can't walk past a charity shop without going in on the off chance there's a mint treasure nestled somewhere in between the easy listening and the obligatory copy of Paul Young's *No Parlez*. He's also been writing words for magazines for longer than anyone can remember.

Laura Barton
Laura is a writer and broadcaster. A regular contributor to *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, she is also a contributing editor at *Q* magazine, and an A&R scout for a music publishing company. Her BBC Radio 4 programme *Notes From A Musical Island* is back for a second series, and she is currently hard at work on a book about music and sadness.

Neil Crossley
Neil is a journalist and editor who writes about music and TV. His work has appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *The Independent*. Neil is also a singer-songwriter and was in the Tony Visconti-produced project International Blue, a 21st-century take on the art of pop crooning. Neil fronts the band Furlined, described as "Morrissey meets Americana".

Teri Saccone
A veteran music journalist who grew up in New York, Teri voraciously pored over album sleeves as a child, studying studio and songwriting credits. Later, she was sucked into the vortex of the music industry while still at university. A sometimes beauty and fashion writer, besides the aural wonders of vinyl, she loves the aesthetics of album design and artwork.

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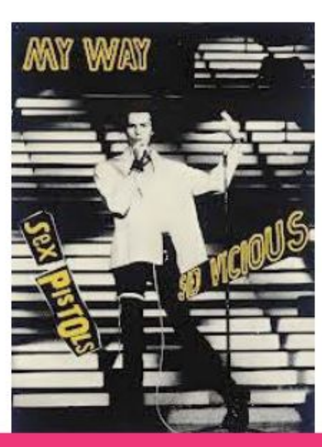

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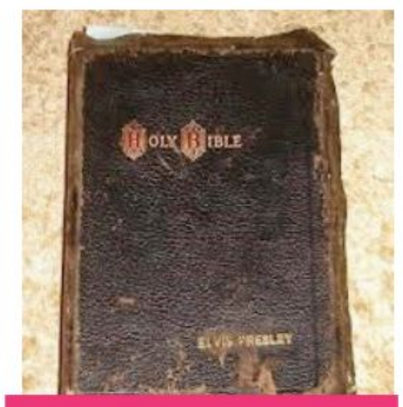

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TUESDAY 16TH OCTOBER: JAZZ, BLUES & SOUL

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On the record

NEW GRANT

John Grant's fourth solo album is due soon, and it's Magic…

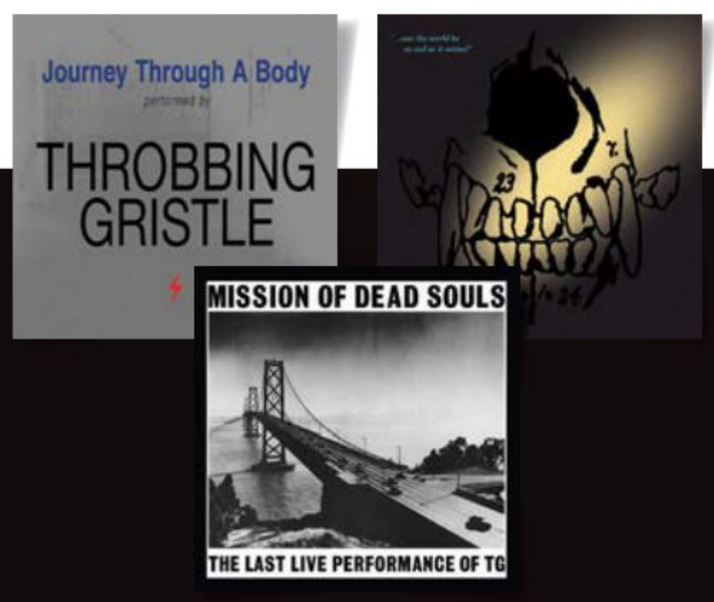
Three years on from his last solo album *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure*, John Grant returns with *Love Is Magic* on 12 October, released by Bella Union. Grant's fourth solo LP, it's his most electronic to date, incorporating collaborations with analogue-synth expert Benge, part of electronic trio Wrangler, who Grant worked with on this year's Creep Show album *Mr Dynamite*. It also features Midlake bassist Paul Alexander, who Grant first collaborated with on 2010's *Queen Of Denmark*. "Each record I make is more of an amalgamation of who I am," says Grant. "The more I do this, the more I trust myself, and the closer I get to making what I imagine in my head." Produced by Grant and engineered by Benge at his Cornish studio, Grant says the often lyrically brutal *Love Is Magic* is "closer still to how I've always wanted my records to sound, but I didn't know how to go about it". Of those lyrics, Grant says: "They're just snapshots of everyday life where myriad moods and every sort of horrible and hilarious occurrence one can imagine mix with the pedestrian, resulting in the absurdity and beauty of life." Grant will be touring Europe between August and November.

100,000

The number of records Jerry Weber, aka Vinyl Man, former owner of Jerry's Records in Pennsylvania, plans to sell for $1 dollar each by the end of the year after retiring from the shop business. He kicked off by setting up his own 'DollarPalooza' event in Pittsburgh, with 15,000 discs on offer in a single day.

Wandering Star

Wanderer, the 10th album by Cat Power, aka Chan Marshall, is set for release on 5 October. A full six years after Marshall's last record, *Sun*, the self-produced album was written and recorded in Miami and LA. It features a number of her musical friends and peers, including Lana Del Rey.



THROBBING AGAIN

Mute has announced a second phase of Throbbing Gristle reissues on 14 September. It will see remastered editions of *Journey Through A Body* (on silver vinyl) and *Mission Of Dead Souls* (white vinyl), while *Heathen Earth* will be re-released on blue vinyl. The second phase follows the 40th anniversary release of *The Second Annual Report*, as well as new editions of *20 Jazz Funk Greats* and *The Taste Of TG: A Beginner's Guide To Throbbing Gristle*.

TWIN LIZZY

24-year-old twins Catherine and Lizzy, best known as Ward Thomas, release their hotly anticipated new album *Restless Minds* on 5 October on WTW Music/Sony Music.

LOUDON HERE

Loudon Wainwright III releases *Years In The Making*, a two-disc set of 45 years of live recordings, demos and more, on 14 September via StorySound.

BONZO REMEMBERED

A festival is being held to celebrate what would have been John Bonham's 70th birthday. It takes place in Bonham's hometown, Redditch, on 22 September.

BROCK 'N' ROLL

Hawkwind's 31st studio album, *Road To Utopia*, is out on Cherry Red Records on 14 September. The record features Eric Clapton.

WINE & WEED

NEW EP OF VINTAGE SONGS

Iron & Wine follow up last year's Grammy-nominated album *Beast Epic* with six-song EP *Weed Garden*, on Sub Pop. Recorded at Chicago's The Loft studio and out on 31 August, it's a collection of songs Sam Beam started working on three years ago as part of the writing phase for *Beast Epic*, but weren't finished in time. It also includes live fan favourite *Waves Of Galveston*.

Live From Nashville

Vinyl-only Jack White live album

Orders are now being taken for a new vinyl-only live Jack White LP documenting the Boarding House Reach tour as part of White's Vault subscription service. It includes recordings from a show at The Blue Room at Third Man Records in Nashville, and an April performance in Detroit. *Live At Third Man Records – Nashville & Cass Corridor* is pressed on blue and white vinyl and is housed in a die-cut sleeve with 'peep-in' artwork.

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Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

For most musicians and music lovers, permanent hearing loss is a mortifying prospect – but our columnist's experience shows it doesn't have to affect your career, or your life…

In 2003, while producing The Duke Spirit's debut mini-album *Roll, Spirit, Roll*, I noticed my ear was getting blocked, as if I was coming down with a cold. A week or two later, it was still bothering me, but I didn't feel at all ill. I went to the doctors to get my ears syringed, hoping that might do the trick. Nothing doing. The doctor sent me for a hearing test. I began to wonder… 20 years of loud monitors on stage, listening to music on Walkmans and iPods – was this having an effect? I failed the test miserably in the problem ear, my right. Within a few minutes, I was sent for an MRI scan that day, and figured pretty soon that something was up. "What do you think it is?" I asked the audiologist. "Wouldn't like to speculate, but always best to get these things checked thoroughly," he replied. "An MRI scan will quickly tell us if there's anything to be concerned about, but hopefully, it'll all be fine."

Later that afternoon, I lay inside a capsule that looked like something NASA had made, with this strange catcher's mask over my head as they fed me slowly into the tunnel. They injected me with a contrast dye to make the arteries in my brain appear more clearly on the scan and told me not to move my head at all until it was all over. I was given these horrid ugly green plastic headphones and handed a 'panic button', which I was told I could press any time if I started to feel anxious or claustrophobic. Funnily enough, the minute they gave me the panic button, I started to feel anxious and claustrophobic, and as soon as the radiologist spoke into the headphones: "Okay, first scan is about to start, don't move your head, this one will last about nine minutes," my nose felt so tickly I wasn't sure how I could last 540 seconds without touching it.

The experience of being inside an MRI scanner is akin to putting your head inside a tiny washing machine filled with large metal balls crashing chaotically around inside the tumbler. Or listening to Test Dept. Eventually, the ordeal was over. Or so I thought.

The radiologist came out of his glass office overlooking the scanning machines below and said I needed to go back to my Ear Nose And Throat doctor at the hospital that afternoon. When the doctor turned the light on behind the hanging X-rays, I saw my brain from many angles, but all with this weird white egg shape on one side. "The reason for your deafness in your right ear, Simon, is that you have a brain tumour," he said. "The hearing is gone forever, I'm very sorry." I don't remember anything much he said after that.

I have an 'acoustic neuroma' – a tumour attached to the nerves of the brain controlling balance, hearing and facial expression

Immediate thoughts ranged from 'how do I tell my kids?' and 'how can I continue working in music now?' to 'it could be worse, I think'.

As it turned out, I have an 'acoustic neuroma' – a rare tumour attached to the nerves of the brain controlling balance, hearing and facial expression. Was it a coincidence that the country's leading brain surgeon of acoustic neuromas, the eminent Professor Bell, just happened to be in the hospital that day, and had space in his schedule the next day to operate and remove the tumour? I asked a lot of questions, such as: "What are the chances of success?"

"94%," he said.

The operation involves drilling a hole in your head and carefully removing the tumour ("very glutinous"), taking care not to damage any more nerves. I couldn't agree to it – too much drama and detail to take in so swiftly, and to make such a life-changing decision. I felt vulnerable; that wasn't the time to be going under the knife, 24 hours after the news.

I went home. I didn't sleep for two weeks, as I researched everything I could and met other surgeons. I consulted with one great specialist in London, who advised me to leave it. "It's a very slow-growing tumour, it's benign and unless you're one of these people who just scream 'get that fucking alien out of my head now', and you can live with it in there, go home, go live your life. If things change and you start to lose your balance or get dizzy, then come back and we'll start some treatment. But why disrupt your life right now?"

His honesty was so refreshing, and while I didn't ignore what was going on, it gave me much-needed perspective. I have MRI scans every few months to monitor 'the egg', and live my life. I didn't tell anyone outside my family until recently; I didn't want to burden anyone with feeling sad or sorry for me. I made a double album last year and have signed most of the bands on Bella Union with one ear.

So why talk about it now? Well, more and more cases like mine are appearing, and I want to give some positive attention to acoustic neuromas. Of course, losing your hearing – maybe more so for someone like me, who makes his living from making and listening to music – can be scary. But it doesn't need to be. I am living proof that you can sometimes find solutions beyond the one you are initially presented with. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***is currently in Lost Horizons and was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins. He founded the independent record label Bella Union***

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Discogs TRENDING CHART

The Top 10 trending vinyl releases from the Discogs community this month

10 Here To Stay
Darrell Banks

9 Bad Witch
Nine Inch Nails

8 Prequelle
Ghost

7 Appetite For Destruction
Guns N' Roses

6 Heaven And Earth
Kamasi Washington

5 Prequelle
Ghost

4 Trout Mask Replica
Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band

3 The Now Now
Gorillaz

2 Mm.. Food
MF Doom

1 Bad Witch
Nine Inch Nails

Official Vinyl Albums Chart

JULY 2018

1 High As Hope
Florence + The Machine

2 Call The Comet
Johnny Marr

3 The Now Now
Gorillaz

4 Pray For The Wicked
Panic At The Disco

5 As You Were
Liam Gallagher

6 BBC Sessions
The Who

7 Appetite For Destruction
Guns N' Roses

8 The Greatest Showman
Motion Picture Cast Recording

9 Lungs
Florence + The Machine

10 Staying At Tamara's
George Ezra

© Official Charts Company. The Weekly Official Vinyl Albums Chart Appears Every Week At OfficialCharts.com

MARISSA NADLER

Work In Progress

For My Crimes

Bella Union, 28 September

My new album is...
For My Crimes, and I'm really looking forward to people hearing it.

The sessions were...
recorded in Los Angeles at Lawrence's House Of Lux studio in Laurel Canyon.

This is the record where I...
have stripped back my vocal effects, for a more intimate and immediate listener experience.

I worked with...
Lawrence Rothman and Justin Raisen as co-producers. Guests on the album are Sharon Van Etten, Angel Olsen, Kristin Kontrol, Mary Lattimore, Patty Schemel, Kat Gardner and Dana Colley. The string arrangements were done by Janel Leppin.

I was inspired by...
the need to write the songs.

I used my...
everything.

I learnt...
that songwriting is still a medicinal balm for me.

Touring this record...
is hopefully going to be great. I'm going to do many stripped-down performances and generally just try to serve the songs as well as I can.

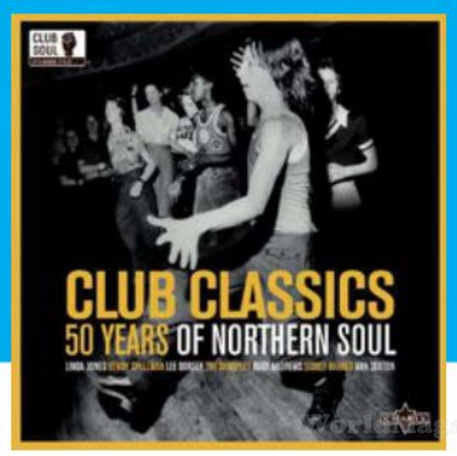
You might be surprised to know...
I have a background as a painter.

More info: www.marissanadler.com

NORTHERN SOUL CELEBRATION

Charly Records has relaunched its Club Soul imprint. To mark the occasion, the label is issuing three compilation LPs celebrating three legendary venues: *The Scene Club: Ham Yard, London 1963-66*; *The Twisted Wheel: Brazennose & Whitworth Street, Manchester 1963-71* and *Wigan Casino Soul Club: Station Road, Wigan 1973-81*.

The albums will be accompanied by a series of new singles: Little Richie, *Just Another Heartache/One Bo-Dillion Years*; Ernie K-Doe *A Certain Girl/Here Come The Girls*; Connie Laverne, *Can't Live Without You*; Anderson Bros., *I Can See Him Loving You* and Little Hank, *Mister Bang Bang Man/Try To Understand*. They're all out now, except for *Wigan Casino*, which is released on 7 September.



OGDENS' NUT GONE FLAKE

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#16 Walls And Bridges

John Lennon

Written during the 18-month separation from Yoko Ono that Lennon referred to as his "lost weekend", *Walls And Bridges* came about after the former Beatle's planned album of rock 'n' roll covers with Phil Spector imploded. The sleeve features a number of childhood drawings Lennon had planned to use for the covers album, along with portraits of him taken by photographer Bob Gruen and assorted esoterica including notes on the origins of the Lennon surname and credits for Rev. Thumbs Ghurkin, Dwarf McDougal and Dr. Winston O'Boogie. The album's front cover is split into flaps that can be mixed and matched to make different versions of Lennon's face, while references to his lifelong obsession with the number nine are plentiful – a quote in the booklet claiming "On the 23rd August 1974 at 9 o'clock I saw a U.F.O."; a drawing of a footballer – George Robledo in the 1952 FA Cup Final scoring a goal wearing the number 9 shirt; and, of course, the song *#9 Dream*. The album topped the US Billboard chart, going gold, and reached No. 6 in the UK album chart.

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Now Spinning

This issue's featured beer is, fittingly, Bone Machine, brewed by Whiplash in County Wicklow, Ireland. It's a tasty 6.2% "straight-up modern American IPA", with candied lemon, resin, papaya and pineapple flavours.

1 ***Broken Face*** – Pixies (4AD)
2 *Not To Touch The Earth* – **The Doors (Madfish)**
3 ***Wish*** – Anna Calvi (Domino)
4 *Lemon (Perfecto Mix)* – **U2 (Island)**
5 ***Donnie Darko*** – Let's Eat Grandma (Transgressive)
6 *Credit In The Straight World* – **Young Marble Giants (Rough Trade)**
7 ***Rollerskate*** – Kevin Krauter (Bayonet Records)
8 *Can't Ask Why* – **Ryley Walker (Dead Oceans)**
9 ***Mis-Shapes*** – Pulp (Island)
10 *Save My Soul* – **Wimple Winch (UMC)**
11 ***Roll (Burbank Funk)*** – The Internet (Columbia)
12 *Inner Meet Me* – **The Beta Band (Because Music)**

Treasure Trove

Posthumous Tom Petty boxset out soon

Reprise Records will release *An American Treasure*, a career-spanning 6LP Tom Petty boxset, this autumn. The set unveils dozens of previously unreleased recordings, alternate versions of classics, rarities and live performances. The package is the first release of Petty's music since his death in October 2017. Tom's daughter Adria and wife Dana are listed as executive producers on the project, curated with Heartbreakers bandmates Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench. Adria and Dana say: "Tom Petty accumulated a wealth of unreleased music in his vaults, and we have collectively uncovered one gem after another that will keep us all listening and discovering new facets of Tom's talent for many years to come." The vinyl version, with a 48-page booklet, is out on 23 November.

FALL'S GOLD

Originally released in 1990 but now in scarce supply, The Fall's *458489 A Sides* gets a reissue on white vinyl by Beggars Arkive on 10 August. Consisting of 17 songs recorded during Brix Smith's time in the band, seen by many as The Fall's 'golden era', the original release was described by legendary critic Robert Christgau as "The only Fall record any normal person need own".

Marley's Kaya Reissued

Bob Marley & The Wailers' March 1978 album *Kaya* will be reissued by The Marley Family, Island Records and UMC on 24 August. The 2LP 180g version, available on green vinyl, features Stephen Marley's 'Kaya 40' mixes of all 10 tracks from the original album, which was recorded during the same sessions that yielded 1977's *Exodus*.

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RICHARD HAWLEY
LIVE AT THE DEVIL'S ARSE (10 AUGUST)
Hawley's second show at the Devil's Arse Cave in the Peak District is now available on vinyl in a collector's edition bundle with extras including an exclusive A3 print by Sheffield artist Pete McKee.

ANNA MEREDITH
ANNO (17 AUGUST)
With her songs described by *The Guardian* as "majestic bangers", Meredith returns with her new album ahead of her appearance at the Edinburgh Festival. Options include a double-vinyl edition and test pressings, as well as exclusive art-poster prints.

TYLA'S DOGS D'AMOUR
IN VINO VERITAS (24 AUGUST)
The perennial rockers' new album is available in signed and numbered gatefold white-vinyl versions. A selection of hand-painted guitars are also on offer as part of the campaign.

THE KOOKS
LET'S GO SUNSHINE (31 AUGUST)
Described by frontman Luke Pritchard as "an album about heartbreak and falling in love", *Let's Go Sunshine* comes in clear-double, white and standard editions. All formats are signed by the band, with a tote bag and handwritten lyrics up for grabs, too.

STONE SOUR
HYDROGRAD (31 AUGUST)
A 28-track Deluxe Edition of the band's 2017 album including unreleased covers, B-sides, live recordings and alternate versions. Also available is a 12" silver EP of acoustic versions, as well as a previously unavailable signed version of *Hydrograd*.

IN THE PIPELINE
THERAPY? *CLEAVE* (21 SEPTEMBER)
BERNIE TORMÉ *SHADOWLAND* (TBC)
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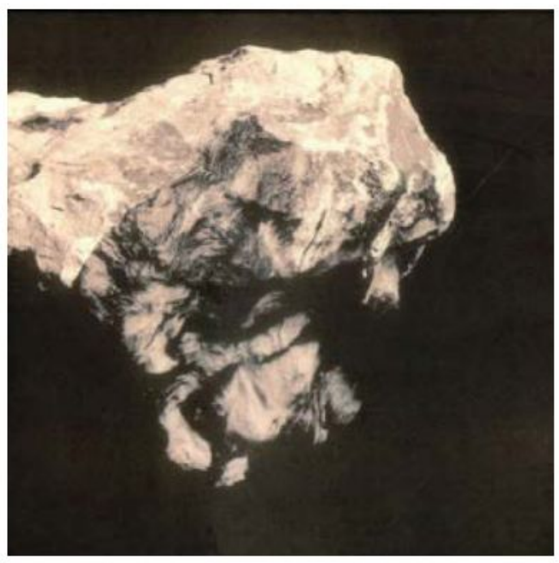

PIXIES
DEATH TO THE PIXIES

1997 UK 4AD limited-edition 38-track 4x10" vinyl LP boxset including 21 live tracks from Utrecht in 1990. Discs came in picture sleeves with a 12-page illustrated booklet and folder, in an outer slipcase picture box (DADD7011). Some copies had a free Pixies carrier bag!

£ **£100**

SMALL FACES
OGDENS' NUT GONE FLAKE

This very early 1968 UK first-issue 12-track stereo vinyl LP was pressed on the lilac Immediate label and housed in a circular fold-out picture sleeve (IMSP012). It's difficult to pin down and, moreover, if the sleeve remains undamaged, yours could fetch a great price.

£ **£500**

PULP
DIFFERENT CLASS

There were two pressings of this vinyl album in 1995: the limited edition, in a black-and-silver embossed die-cut picture sleeve with a choice of 12 different picture inserts, and the regular issue (ILPS8041). Now-rare 90s vinyl – if mint, yours might fetch £200 or £100 respectively.

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SUEDE
COMING UP

1996 UK 10-track vinyl, which came with a glossy lyric inner and picture sleeve (NUDE6LP). Another rare 90s record… Mint copies of this elusive album are going for top dollar.

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On The Radar

KEVIN KRAUTER

Thrift shop synth leads to pop awakening for Indiana singer-songwriter

Kevin Krauter's debut LP *Toss Up* was created in an atmosphere he describes as "useful solitude". The Indiana native – also a member of Hoops – has been taking time out from working collaboratively as part of a band to concentrate wholeheartedly on his own creative vision – and the results are stunning. *Toss Up* deviates from the style of wistful, stripped-back folk that Krauter championed throughout his initial EPs *Magnolia* and *Changes* into a rich smorgasbord of 60s flower pop, 70s easy listening, 80s new wave, 90s alt radio and 00s indie rock.

This change in pace and broadening of styles was germinated in the basement of Krauter's family home, where he would spend hours repeating intricate melodies to himself, focusing intensely on the minutiae of each would-be track. "That was my domain for a long time," he says. "I would hang out at home and smoke some weed and sit at my organ or my piano and play the same thing for three hours or so. It was this meditative experience where I felt kind of crazy, but it was also nice to be totally alone, to get to know myself a little bit in that way."

Another important driving force behind Krauter's growth is the use of organ and synthesiser, which permeate the album and which he taught himself to play over the year period in which *Toss Up* was written. Much of the record came from Krauter "fucking around" at home on his piano and a restless need to "be doing something new"; a refusal to stay in the same place artistically. "The organ I found at Goodwill," Kevin explains. "It was 20 bucks and I took the tag off and put a $6 tag on from a calculator, because I was like: 'I don't know if this thing is going to work', but then I got it home and I was like: 'Damn, this is so sick!' I ended up using it on every song on my album and I play it live, too."

Thematically, Krauter often explores love and existential wonder within his music through lyrics which are evocative and whimsical in equal measure; typified in playful lines such as: "Feel like every single day's such a piece of cake/ I was trying to bring some home". Influence for this style is drawn from a love of The Clientele and authors Haruki Murakami, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut Jr, for the "aloofness" with which they tackle dense subject matter.

Another reason that Krauter prescribes to the questioning nature of his lyrics is his departure from Christianity during college. "What I considered my foundation of self-confidence and self-purpose and all of that, I've come to realise that it's not something that I agree with anymore, or really hold on to," he explains. It was a realisation that left him wondering: "Do I have to find some foundation of confidence and purpose? Is that required of me? What does it look like? I felt like through my religious convictions, I was holding onto a lot of guilt and poor self-image, with low self-confidence. From stepping away from that, I think I was able to step into a more confident version of myself and a more optimistic and overall accepting view of the world around me, such as it is."

Since high school, Kevin has been embroiled in record collecting, frequently visiting Luna Music – who put out one of the first Hoops records on vinyl – in Indianapolis. "One of my favourite things is digging through reuse sections and finding old albums," he says. "It's really fascinating that it's still such a tangible experience you can find music through." ●

Sam Willis

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It's that classic pub conversation that begins with: "What was the first record you bought?" I don't know about yours, but I do know about Paul Weller's and Neneh Cherry's. And mine was bought quite by accident...

Perhaps the most pioneering record of 1980 was Ultravox's *Vienna*. And I'd love to say that was the first record I ever bought, but, in the spring of 1980, I set off to Woolworths to buy the single that Ultravox – and all their fans – despise. *Shaddap You Face* by Joe Dolce. This was the novelty song that kept *Vienna* off the No. 1 spot.

That's something which has taken me many years to admit! But it shouldn't be that shameful. *Shaddap You Face* went to No. 1 in 11 other countries. And it's definitely the only song to have since been covered by KRS-One, EMF and Samuel L. Jackson.

Anyway, when I arrived at Woolworths to buy my first-ever single, Joe Dolce had sold out. The rack of 7"s for the No. 1 spot was completely empty! I had 99p burning a hole in my pocket, so a Plan B had to be hatched and I went for a single that looked interesting and was hovering around the No. 7 spot: *Antmusic* by Adam & The Ants.

That's the story of the first record I bought. But what about everyone else? I asked a few friends recently and the answers that came back couldn't have been more different. *Hot Love* by T. Rex, *I Don't Like Mondays* by The Boomtown Rats, and "something by Bugs Bunny!"

How about yours? And how about the musicians we know and love? The first record Paul Weller bought was *Wonderboy* by The Kinks. Graham Coxon's was *Roxanne* by The Police, and Giorgio Moroder's was *Diana* by Paul Anka.

"It was the first single that I bought with my own saved-up money," Weller told BBC Radio 6 Music of *Wonderboy*. "That was in 1968, when I was 10. I was a huge Kinks fan, and that was the first single of theirs I could afford."

Which is all well and good. But what if – like me with my Joe Dolce moment, or my friend with Bugs Bunny – the first record you ever set out to buy is not something that goes on to become either cool, cult, or classic?

What if – like me with my Joe Dolce moment – the first record you ever set out to buy is not something that goes on to become either cool, cult, or classic?

We just have to 'fess up and rest assured that we're not alone. "The first one I bought, you won't believe, was a Donny Osmond record!" Words spoken by someone whose records are generally a combination of cool, cult and classic all at the same time – Neneh Cherry.

She was living in New York with her dad, the jazz trumpeter Don Cherry, and "he would go out and come back with Chaka Khan, Earth, Wind & Fire, and we would sit and journey through the record player," she said of her character-forming years. "I was surrounded by all my dad's friends, jazz artists like Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane and his records." But Donny Osmond? Quite simply: "That's what everybody I went to school with was listening to!" ●

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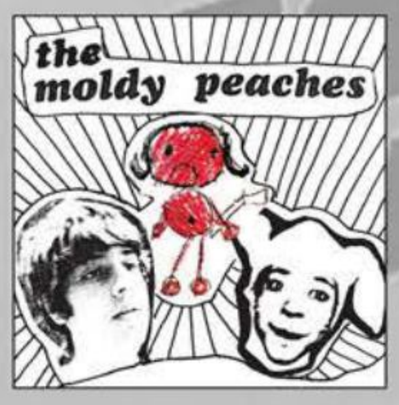

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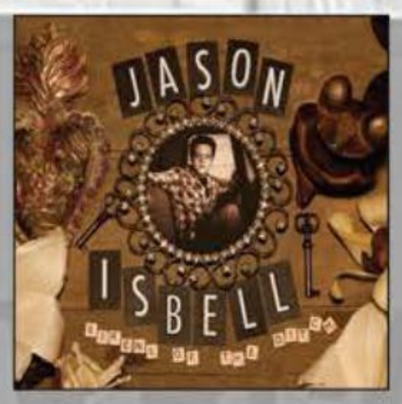


JASON ISBELL
SIRENS OF THE DITCH
New West

CRATE DIGGING WITH... Graham Fellows

Graham Fellows is known best for creating comedy persona John Shuttleworth. But in 1978, as Jilted John, he had the whole of the UK chanting the bitter chorus: "Gordon is a moron". We catch up with Fellows as he prepares to embark on Ere We Go 2... 3... 40, his October tour of the UK to celebrate Jilted John's 40th anniversary...

THE ISLEY BROTHERS
3 + 3

"Astonishingly good – I'd buy it just for the first 15 seconds of *That Lady*, with Ernie Isley's Hendrixy guitar. I also love *The Highways Of My Life* and *Summer Breeze*, which taught me something I never knew – our minds contain jasmine."

THE BYRDS
ORIGINAL SINGLES 1965-1967, VOL 1

"20 years before Johnny Marr, McGuinn showed guitarists how to play a 12-string and The Beatles how to harmonise. If *Eight Miles High* is their masterpiece, *Turn! Turn! Turn!* is their finest production."

SHELLEYAN ORPHAN
HELLEBORINE

"I don't know what the title means either (or the group's name), but any pretentiousness is excused the instant Caroline Crawley opens her beautiful mouth and sings of *Epitaph Ivy And Woe* and *Anatomy Of Love*."

JOHN COLTRANE
MY FAVORITE THINGS

"I heard the title track when I was drunk at a friend's house. It was just playing in the background, but the repetitive piano riffs of McCoy Tyner made me listen in awe. I play it every day while I'm doing my stretches."

MOTT THE HOOPLE
MOTT

"I nicked this album off my sister, Sally, in the early 70s... The track I remember most is *I Wish I Was Your Mother*. It's a sweet little rock ballad; one of those songs that moves you and you're a bit embarrassed by how emotional you're suddenly feeling."

PREFAB SPROUT
SWOON

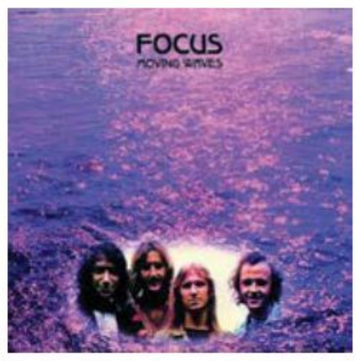
"*Cruel* deals with the dilemma of being a new man... It contains the exquisite couplet 'If I'm troubled by every folding of your skirt/ Am I guilty of every male-inflicted hurt?'. No, you're not, Paddy. Shave off your beard and get back on the road!"

THE BEATLES
RUBBER SOUL

"Apparently, this was the first album The Beatles recorded at leisure – and it shows. With the exception of the annoying *Drive My Car*, the whole album is reflective and folky, drawing you in and causing you to think about life... an understated masterpiece."

DAVID BOWIE
THE WORLD OF DAVID BOWIE

"I love Bowie's early quirky, childish ditties and, with the exception of *The Laughing Gnome*, they're all here. His delivery is clearly inspired by the likes of Anthony Newley... a great LP to have on while you're doing your morning jobs."



FOCUS
MOVING WAVES

"There's little yodelling on this album. Instead, astonishing tunes – with mind-boggling chord changes I can only shake my head in wonder at. The musicianship is stunning: *Sylvia* [from *Focus 3*] is still probably the tune I'd be most happy to die hearing."

SQUEEZE
EAST SIDE STORY

"I used to be jealous of Squeeze's success; it seemed they were ploughing a similar furrow to the one I'd tried to with Jilted John, but I can take heart knowing I rhymed 'smelly' with 'telly' before them. Chart hits aside, this album is full of lesser-known gems." ●

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PINK FLOYD

Abbey Road Studios, February 1967

EMI engineer Norman Smith had worked with The Beatles from 1962 to 1965, but he left the Fab Four to become Pink Floyd's producer, returning to Abbey Road's Studio Three to start work on their debut album *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* on 21 February, 1967.

"I wasn't upset to leave The Beatles," Smith said later. "I could see that things weren't going so well at that time with them. We'd had such a happy time before, but at that point, it wasn't so happy anymore."

While Smith and his new charges were working in Studio Three, down the corridor in Studio Two The Beatles were forging *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,* with Paul McCartney dropping in to give his former engineer a positive reference. A Top 10 hit on release, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* was Syd Barrett's melancholic, psych-pop masterpiece and the troubled songwriter's only album with Pink Floyd.

GRAN DESIGNS

The mesmerising, idiosyncratic DIY pop of Let's Eat Grandma's 2016 debut heralded a major new talent. But with their follow-up, *I'm All Ears*, Rosa Walton and Jenny Hollingworth have dreamt up a classic, says **Sam Willis**

It's a warm summer evening and on the other end of the crackling phone line are Jenny Hollingworth and Rosa Walton of Let's Eat Grandma. We're talking about porridge. Porridge is a curious topic to open an article about one of the UK's most exciting acts, but this is an age of hyperbolic fanaticism, so what better to bring us back down to earth than delicious beige porridge? It gets better.

"We were in the studio with [Transgressive labelmate] SOPHIE", says Rosa, "and I had to make her porridge, because she'd just got off a flight from LA. So I made her porridge and I put it in a Tupperware, but I forgot to take it, so she didn't have any breakfast." This all sounds very inconsequential, but this exchange is the fruit of self-induced lucid dreaming via hypnosis. A mirage within Rosa's mind's eye.

"It puts your body to sleep but keeps your mind awake," she explains. "So you keep seeing the visuals as if you were going into a dream, but you can stay awake and watch them, instead… it's interesting that it's connecting two big things in my life, SOPHIE and porridge."

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It's certainly a unique and uncommon well to draw influence from, but in the context of Let's Eat Grandma's music and character, it makes complete sense. Consistently, Jenny and Rosa use vibrant imagery and an otherworldly mysticism as key cornerstones of their sound and thematic content. This unique tool to blur the lines between dreams and reality is an interesting analogy for their music in general.

Let's Eat Grandma's 2016 debut *I, Gemini* focused in on the former: a dreamland for "escapism". That first record, which was lauded by critics internationally, was the culmination of years of creativity from the impressively young age of 13. It is drenched with cryptic, childlike mythology – songs about fairy tales and a celebration of youthful curiosity; a refusal to be pinned down by the fetters of convention.

Throughout its dark, chilling and distinctly British contours, *I, Gemini* balanced whimsy, menace and melancholy on a Fisher-Price knife edge with blistering skill. Utilising extra-long intros on a number of tracks, hand-clapping games as instrumentation and an

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TIM DELLOW TRANSGRESSIVE

Let's Eat Grandma's label co-founder on the record

"Let's Eat Grandma are true auteurs. To my mind, this record is one of the most important in the label's history, one that not only captures the mood of our times, reflecting open-heartedly the band's experiences, but one that I believe will stand the test of time and help many different people at many different stages of their lives. Rosa and Jenny's writing uniquely distorts the mundanity of existence, refracting it into hyper-tones of illumination and makes me feel a genuine connection to humanity. It's a special album."

impressively disparate selection of styles, they succeeded in making something that feels as though it's both a total free-for-all from two people bursting at the seams with ideas, and a carefully orchestrated narrative held together by the one enduring conceit of a child's imagination. The balance between childlikeness and impressive experimentation is consistently unsettling.

However, this impressive form at such a young age raised eyebrows, with some people in the industry assuming there was a Svengali behind the scenes, pulling the strings. "I'm not going to lie, that did piss me off a bit," says Jenny. "It's just horrible not to have your work accredited to you." That understandable annoyance made them "apprehensive" of collaborations. Both Jenny and Rosa became "worried about people automatically taking the credit away from us". For them, it was a bewildering notion to consider that some old bloke in the industry could even create their music if he tried, so concerned are the songs with youthful wonder and sounding "so… us", according to the pair.

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

One explanation for some scepticism might be the unnaturally fierce intelligence that is evident as soon as you speak to Jenny and Rosa. Some people simply don't want to believe they are so far behind two people so young. The exaggeration of their twin-like qualities; the intertwined hair, the eerily similar voices, their presence on stage, the very title of their debut record and the habit they have of finishing off each other's sentences during interviews, also created a 'brand' – for want of a better word – that has the fingerprints of some unseen industry maestro. No, all of these aspects of Let's Eat Grandma are an organic product of their natural closeness. As inseparable best friends from the age of four, they've developed the same artistic vision and it has coalesced over the past five years of evolution and creation into something extraordinary. On their second album, *I'm All Ears*, Let's Eat Grandma's ability to create wild, otherworldly music has diminished not one iota, but their entwined identities and voices on the record have pulled further apart.

Lifelong best friends Jenny Hollingworth (l) and Rosa Walton wrote their first album in their mid-teens

"WE'RE VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE TO WHEN WE WROTE THE FIRST RECORD. WE'VE GOT INTO DIFFERENT THINGS"

"We're very different people now to when we wrote the first record," says Rosa. "We've got into different things, had different experiences and bring different things to the record." During the two years since *I, Gemini* they've had the sorts of first-time life experiences and period of drastic inner change that is natural for teenagers. They've left education and, unlike most of their contemporaries, embarked on a litany of tour dates and summertime festival slots, which have fuelled a somewhat nomadic existence. Although they command more space as individuals on and off the record, they also insist "it doesn't mean that we're not as close as friends". This wealth of experience from the past two

Let's Eat Grandma playing at Glasgow Stereo with drummer Remi Graves

years is evident in the make-up of the album, with reality taking precedence over mystic conceits and fairy tales. "When we write, for us, it's quite an intuitive thing," says Jenny. "Everything that comes out are just things we've absorbed over the time that we've spent writing. Because so much had happened, I think that's why people hear such a difference between our records."

The results are far more inclusive. Rather than being cryptic in their lyrics and the themes they explore, they cover personal experiences and emotions more candidly. These intimate moments come through Jenny and Rosa's close bond with each other and the people they love, as they walk us through illustrations of their own self-discovery. Tracks such as *It's Not Just Me*, which is "one of the most personal tracks on the record", and paints the image of a blossoming relationship; or *Ava* – a ballad about mental health – hold up a mirror to the feelings and experiences we have all gone through. It's through this recognisability that the music commands such a deeply emotional connection.

As well as communicating matters of the heart, the songs on *I'm All Ears* discuss broader topics of the mind with dexterity and maturity. Using conversations they've had with friends and first-hand experience as an influence, throughout the record, Jenny and Rosa voice their concerns about living as a young person in society.

SOMETHING UN-MUNDANE

One of the topics they tackle with the most ire is consumerism. On *Snakes & Ladders*, they air their irritation at the "things I go off and buy into" and ask instead, at the end of the closing verse, for: "Something real, something evergreen, something un-mundane."

"I think it's something that's frustrating to us," says Rosa, "because you can be so aware of consumerism and the negative impact of it, but not actually be able to fully escape it or do much about it, because it's just the way the world is." As an example, they tell us about the mum of one of their friends, who had been boycotting Nestlé all of her life and had recently realised the futility of it all. That it is just one head of the hydra and even if one were able to decapitate it, it would soon return. This inability to change much as individuals means that these topics need to be spoken about by people with a platform to raise awareness. "A lot of problems in society get scapegoated onto people who definitely aren't responsible for them," explains Jenny. "That's a major issue, because it's a lot about brainwashing and the press. All of the major news outlets are owned by people who have a lot of money, and therefore want the laws to be beneficial only to them. That's just how it works and you have to challenge the system and try and get more people aware of that. It all links. Consumerism really links to inequality and even stuff like racial issues."

Elsewhere, in *Hot Pink* – the first track to emerge from the album and one of two co-written and produced by SOPHIE and Faris Badwan of The Horrors – Jenny and Rosa craft a track that "celebrates femininity" and the power of it for both women and men. It's a rallying cry for those affected by gender inequality here and worldwide. Rather than the societal default being that masculinity is superior, they "think that people should be ▶

"SO MUCH HAPPENED, I THINK THAT'S WHY PEOPLE HEAR SUCH A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR RECORDS"

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"IF SOMETHING AFFECTS US AND OUR FRIENDS, IT'S NATURALLY GOING TO COME OUT IN OUR MUSIC"

able to express that side of themselves". The track describes a sneering villain who passes judgement and sees them as an "object of disdain". It also cleverly exposes tags, like "drama queen" as tools used to dismiss women as hysterical, at the same time as repurposing stereotypes of childlike femininity as something to be fiercely proud of in the hook: "On my pony in the sky I just want/ Anything and everything, just paint it all in hot pink."

PRODUCTION VALUES

On a more personal level, too, this song rails against the assumption that Jenny and Rosa's existence as young women is somehow a hurdle to overcome. "One thing I've noticed about our music, specifically," says Jenny, "is it's almost like people are saying: 'Oh, they make this music that we really like, despite being young women', instead of because of it. Everything about our music says that we are young women and we're teenagers, otherwise we wouldn't make it like we do."

These two songs, in particular, show an unflinching desire to talk about topics that a lot of artists might shy away from. "Because it's something that we think about a lot," says Rosa, "something that affects us and our friends, it's just naturally going to come out in our music." These are the types of conversations that young, intelligent and politically aware people have as they reach the end of their adolescence, and it's something Let's Eat Grandma have managed to distil into an equally conversational and engaging format. However, there is a trepidation when tackling these subjects.

"If you are going to talk about them, it's important to be responsible," says Jenny. "I feel like that's something that I still feel that I'm learning about. I think that's often why people shy away from it, because they're worried about saying the wrong thing. Especially when you have a platform. For us, we just write about things that are a part of our lives."

As well as a discourse around personal emotions and wider societal issues developing in maturity, so too has the overall quality of production for their sophomore record. Last year, Jenny and Rosa studied production at college, which became a vehicle for change in the way they both write and "view sound". Progressing to writing via software on a laptop during that time enabled them to "see what you're making on a screen in front of you," says Rosa. "That's maybe one of the reasons that we've been able to write in slightly more conventional structures instead of having really long, winding songs all of the time." Now, the long intros are only there when they need to be, instead of being because of some impulsive desire.

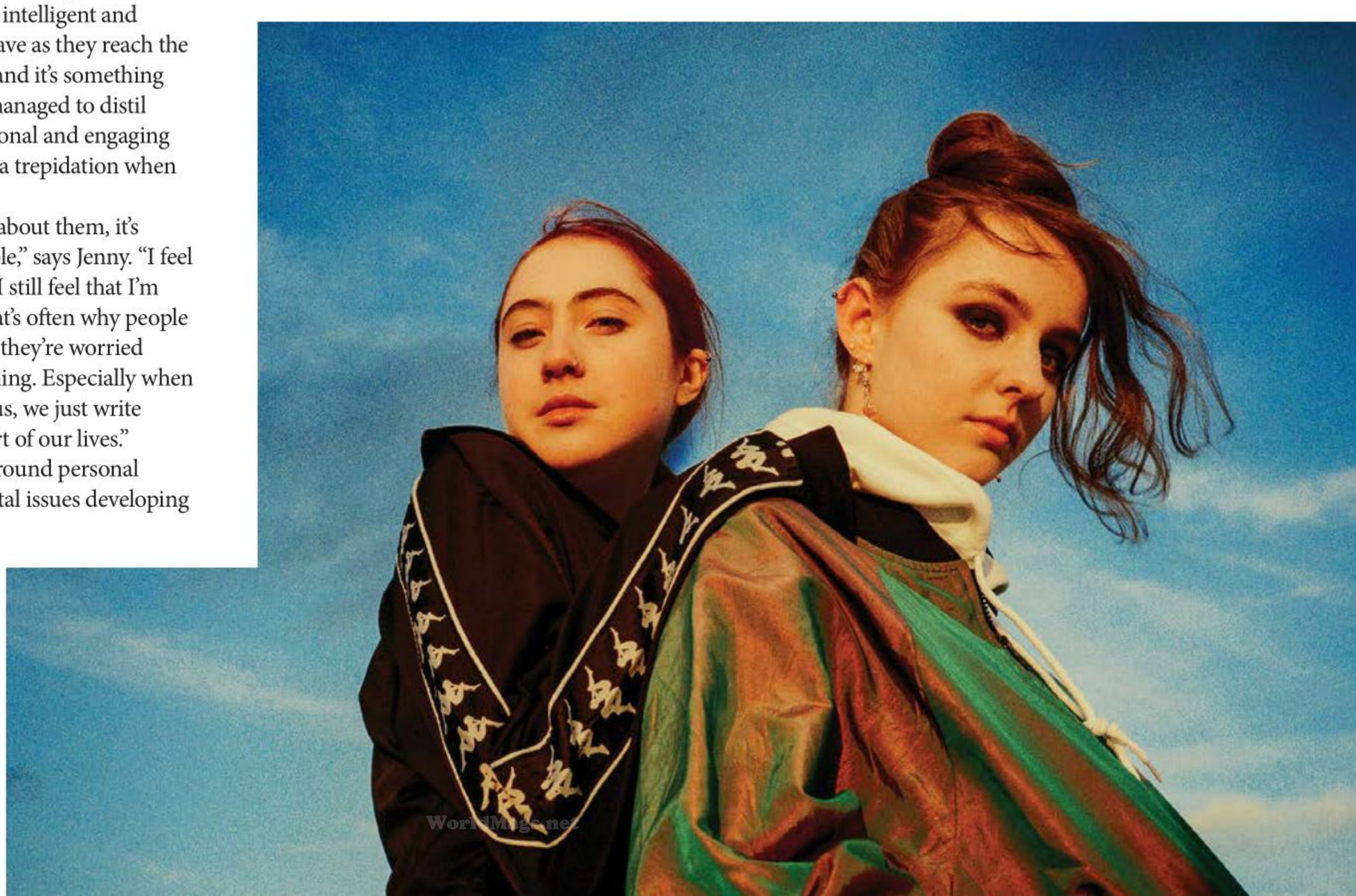
As well as developing the key tools they need themselves, David Wrench (Frank Ocean, The xx) was enlisted as the producer and provided tutelage and guidance. "David's incredible," says Rosa. "He's got an incredible analogue-synth collection. We went in with demos and layered a lot of the synths that we'd made on Logic with loads of David's analogue synths and it completely brought everything to life. He just knows how to find the exact sound that we wanted."

Wrench also shares many of the values that Let's Eat Grandma explore on *I'm All Ears*; both of them insist on working with women in the studio, and David had even refused to work in one unless they hired female engineers. As mentioned earlier, elsewhere on production and co-write credits are fellow Transgressive pop auteur SOPHIE and Faris Badwan of The Horrors, who worked on *Hot Pink* and *Not Just Me*. Their input and guidance helped Jenny and Rosa understand "how to write good pop songs".

"They're the two, like, poppiest songs on the record," says Rosa. "I don't think we would have been able to nail a proper pop song if we hadn't had the guidance from them. Especially because the other songs we wrote, we wrote after that. It was a good learning process. Both SOPHIE and Faris are incredible."

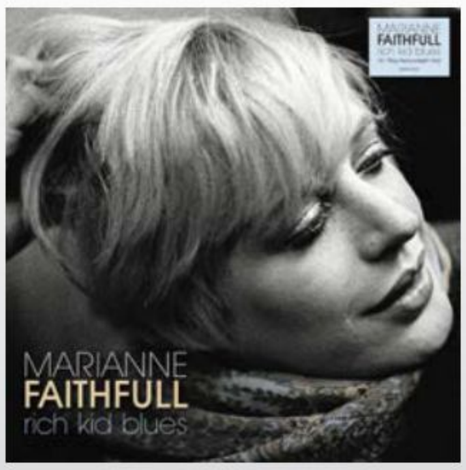
Like SOPHIE – who is currently celebrating the release of her own critically acclaimed debut *Oil Of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* – Jenny and Rosa have the entire world of pop at their feet. Their ability to write deeply affecting music, which holds a mirror up to society and so accurately portrays the loves, pains and concerns of youth, is enchanting and executed with a skill far beyond their years of experience.

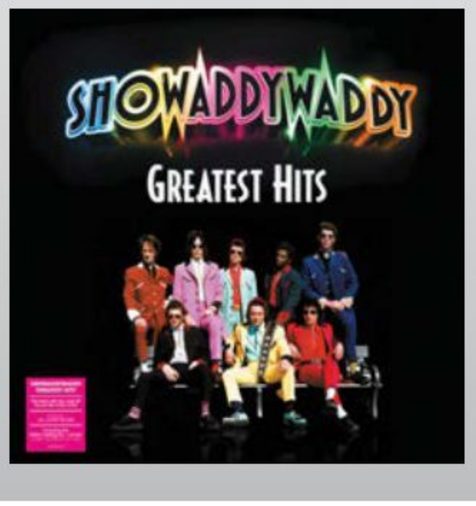
They, quite seriously, are becoming standard-bearers for a brave new frontier of music and have perfected a template, which will doubtlessly spread ever further throughout the remainder of the decade. If this is what they've managed to produce at only 18 and 19, it will be a joy to hear what will come in the next 10, 20, 30 years, because they certainly have the legs for it. ●

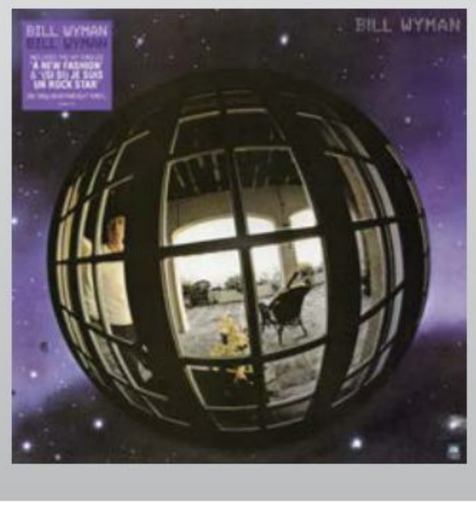


I'm All Ears* foregrounds more socially conscious lyrical themes over the unreal feel and escapism of its 2016 predecessor, *I, Gemini

CLASSIC COMPILATIONS, ALBUMS AND BOX SETS ON VINYL FROM DEMON RECORDS







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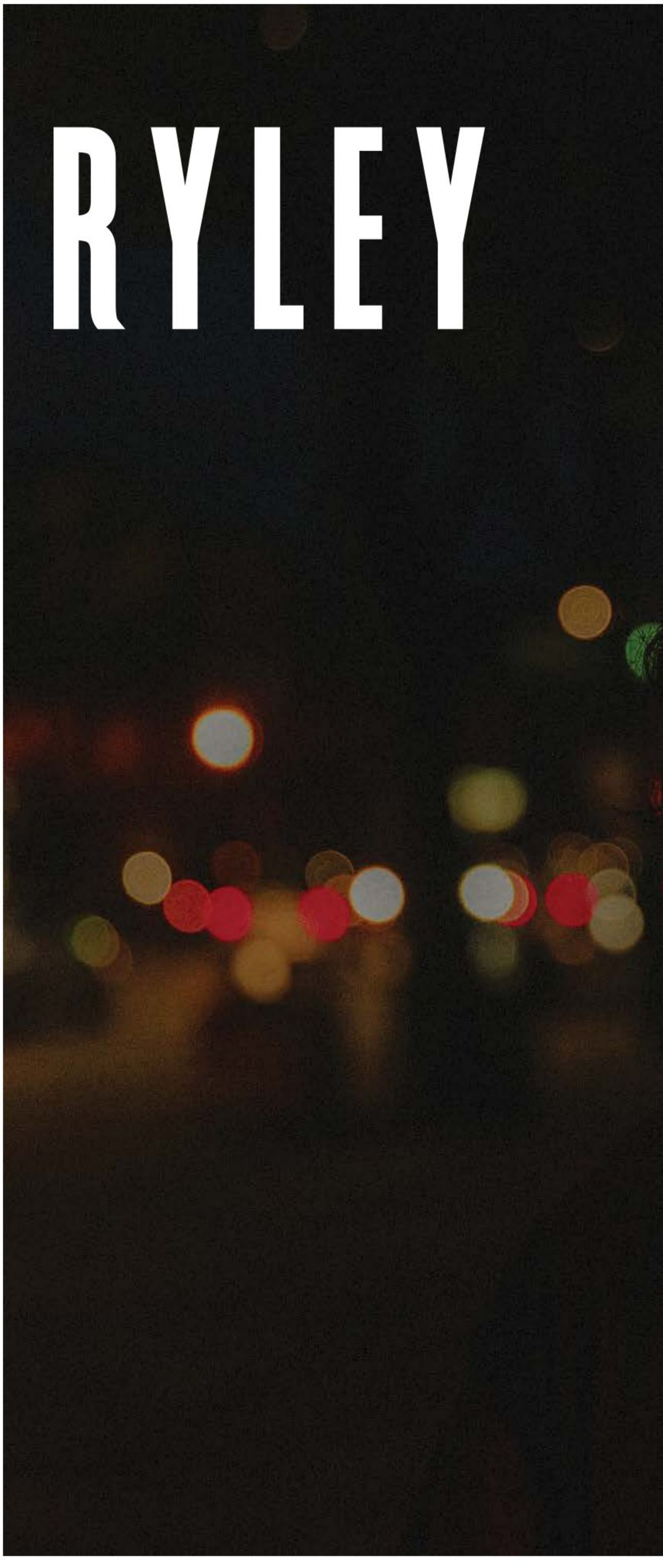
LIFE OF RYLEY

His fifth album, *Deafman Glance*, arrived in May – and it's the virtuoso Chicago-based guitarist's best yet. Ryley Walker tells **Laura Barton** about making the album, life on the road, and how buying records brought him out into the world…



Somewhere on the road to Atlanta, Ryley Walker is newly awake in the back of his van. "I had collard greens and fried chicken and biscuits for lunch," he says blurrily. "And then I kept dozing off." Walker is in the midst of touring his fifth album, *Deafman Glance*, when we speak. It's a tour that will take him through the southern United States and on through a glut of European festivals and club dates. "Man, I love touring," he says. "It's always a good opportunity to get out and see the world and get to play your tunes at the same time."

Back home in Chicago, Walker, 28, has recently moved house, taking up residence in a whole new neighbourhood on the city's South Side after many years near Humboldt Park. For a music fan to up sticks after so many years naturally brings particular challenges: "You know, getting a couch up some stairs isn't so bad, but when you have thousands of records… that shit is exhausting to pack and unpack," he says. "But it's kind of nice to file through everything. I found a bunch of records I thought I'd lost. It's like some sort of treasure hunt."

Since 2015's *Primrose Green*, Walker's songwriting has been a firm favourite among musical treasure hunters, his music carrying shades of artists such as Van Morrison, Mike Cooper and John Martyn, without ever falling into mystical-folk pastiche. It's an effortless revivalism that led him on to 2016's *Golden Sings That Have Been Sung*, but he's variously embraced and spurned this reputation, wearying sometimes of its preciousness.

SONGS FROM THE CITY

Deafman Glance, then, is Walker's least reverential and finest album to date. Drawing on life in Chicago, the joy and isolation of a giant city, the bleakness, the street lights and the grey, it's experimental, jazz-wreathed, trippy and backed by a cast of Chicago's boldest musicians, including Nate Lepine, Matt Lux, Bill MacKay and producer LeRoy Bach. He handed it to his record label, Dead Oceans, with an apology; but it has been received rapturously by critics, as the sound of a remarkable talent finding its true voice.

For all his reputation as a cratedigger's delight, Walker is thoroughly undevout in his feelings towards vinyl. He is, he insists, an unwavering ▶

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fan of the CD. "Obviously, I like records, but I really like CDs, and people are just throwing them the hell out," he says, sounding faintly gobsmacked. "I was just in a record shop in Columbia, South Carolina and CDs were three for 10 bucks – I got some really cool Lee 'Scratch' Perry CDs." It's the format, he explains, that fits his lifestyle best: "I drive a lot, I'm always on the road. And I don't mind streaming, but listening to a CD keeps me in 'record mode', and not so schizophrenic."

At home, though, before he embarked on this year's tour, he enjoyed setting out his records again. "I got one of those IKEA record shelves," he says, "and I file by genre, typically. There are so many blurred lines doing that, but it's my fucking collection, so fuck it. There's no alphabetical ordering yet – I don't have enough amphetamines to keep me up for that."

BORN TO PLAY THE PART

The first album Walker bought was the soundtrack to *Annie*: "Which is so fucking lame – my first record has Daddy Warbucks on! But I really wanted to be in plays and stuff when I was a kid, and I had an audition for *Annie*." He doesn't remember the role. "It was probably to be in the chorus," he says. "I wasn't cute and red-headed, so it definitely wasn't the lead." Sadly, his soundtrack investment came to nought. "I didn't get picked!" he cries, sounding cruelly robbed. Still, we point out, he's had the last laugh. "Yeah," he agrees. "Little did they know that one day I would grow up to be sleeping in a van in a truck stop in South Carolina!"

He laughs and then launches into song: "The sun'll come out to-morrah! So I didn't get the part and after that, I was like 'fuck showbusiness, I'm gonna get into music now'."

Getting into music in Rockford, Illinois involved gaining a familiarity with the city's various record stores, beginning with the purchase of R.E.M.'s *The Great Beyond* at Media Play. "Media Play was a chain in the Midwest," Walker explains. "I guess I'm nostalgic for those big-box record stores, where they had those big, stupid plastic security tags and you could buy sheet music and guitars and T-shirts. We also had Sam Goody's and Tower Records downtown in Chicago. At that time, I was looking for Epitaph records, NOFX… and Tower had a punk section."

Over time, Walker began to see the appeal of more specialised record shops, and remembers with particular affection a short-lived store named Acne Records, in Rockford. "It was run by a guy named Nathan – I don't remember his last name, but he was probably a grad student and he liked indie rock a lot," he says. "He never had any customers – I swear my friend Matt and I were the only people who went. But he got us into Pavement and Guided By Voices and Sonic Youth. There are three or four people in my life who I barely remember their names, but they used to work at record stores and just used to drop crazy knowledge. Strangers. We didn't have long-lasting relationships, but they opened crazy doors for me." Walker himself has never worked in a record store. "I applied," he says, sadly. "But it's a hard job to get. I hope they kept my résumé on file."

With much of his life now spent on the road, Walker enjoys visiting record stores in the cities he plays. "When I wake up and I need coffee, I try to go record shopping," he says. "But I don't make any money, so it always depends on economics how big the stack under my arm is." In Columbia, he found a store named Papa Jazz Records. "It was really cool – super-old wooden crates everywhere," he says. "I always go to the local section in a store, too, where there's lots of weird music, like gospel bands from the 70s or something. You'll be in Stoke-on-Trent and find something from around that area, and that's really special to bring home."

In the tour van lately, however, he has found himself listening to a lot of the Dave Matthews Band. "I guess when you grow up in America, he's

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part of the American lexicon, part of the American culture," Walker explains. "He never made it big over in the UK or Europe, but over here, he sells out football stadiums and sells tens of millions of records. And I'm sure somebody from the Alan Lomax Foundation would think this is insane, but he's part of the *American Songbook*, because one of the first songs American kids learn on guitar is *Crash*." Matthews' failure to translate to UK or European audiences is easily explained, Walker says: "Because he's quintessentially hokey and there doesn't seem to be any irony in it. But I'm sure he's a sweet, nice guy."

We ask Walker to name a few of the gems from his record collection and he digs out his notebook to find the list he made, and begins talking effusively, all trace of fried-chicken-and-biscuits drowsiness evaporated. "One record in particular I've listened to a lot is Derek Bailey's *Ballads*," he says. "I think that's my favourite guitar record – it's up there with Jimi Hendrix records as far as having a guitar influence on me." Bailey, who was born in Sheffield and died in 2005, was a leading light in the free-improvisation movement – and it is improvisation that fuels much of Walker's own work. "He turns all of these traditional songs and songs from the *American Songbook* inside out," he explains. "It's like a loving tribute to all these songs. It's just so beautiful, and I feel like I'm living inside his guitar while he's playing."

He also cites Muslimgauze, the musical project of British experimental electronic musician Bryn Jones, influenced by the history and conflicts of the Muslim world. "He put out a thousand records, really good music," Walker says, naming the album *Arab Quarter* as perhaps his favourite. "It's experimental 'found sounds' from all around the world and he does industrial techno noise with it," he says. "Every album he does is like three fucking hours. But it's such great driving music, it feels like I'm being propelled to my final destination."

He's also a huge fan of Dutch punk band The Ex and their 1995 album, *Mudbird Shivers*. "They're a hardcore punk band, but at the same time playing Afrobeat stuff. It's just incredible putting those two worlds together. It's really adventurous and really chaotic, but they control the chaos. And that's one of my favourite records, I love that record! It's smart, fun, cool music." He thinks about it for a moment. "I would really love to jam with that band," he says. "I really like their approach to doing different stuff all the time."

Lastly, Walker recommends the singer-songwriter, Sachiko Kanenobu. "She's from Tokyo. I don't even know if she's still alive, but she has a record called *Misora*; it has elements of Karen Carpenter, really nice FM-pop jazzy singer-songwriting," he says. "I heard it on Mike Watt's radio show [Watt, co-founder of The Minutemen, presents an internet programme named *The Watt From Pedro Show*]. The original LP is my Holy Grail record. When it gets on Discogs, which is like once every other year, it's like $3,000!" He sounds incredulous: "I don't have enough money ever to afford it, but it's the one record I want so bad. Even the reissues go for $200. Who the fuck is buying this? There's maybe 500 people in the world who want this record as badly as I do."

WE ASK WALKER TO NAME A FEW OF THE GEMS FROM HIS RECORD COLLECTION AND HE DIGS OUT HIS NOTEBOOK TO FIND THE LIST HE MADE

BIG IN JAPAN

Some while ago, Walker posted some of Kanenobu's songs on his Twitter feed, speaking about his love for her music and the probable impossibility of ever owning her record. "And when I went to Japan last year, this really cool kid who liked my music had bought me the reissue," he says. "And the reissue's gorgeous. It's super-groovy. But one day, before I leave this mortal coil, I will hold the original record!"

We ask Walker what it was like, all those years ago, to hold the first vinyl issue of his own music? He is out of the van now, and down the line comes the sound of fresh air and birdsong. "Oh man, that's a really cool moment for any musician – my first thing on vinyl was a 45 and my girlfriend at the time did the design for it, and I was overjoyed," he recalls. "And I'm not jaded by it at all. I'm still giddy when I get a test pressing back. Because that was always the dream. I love making records more than anything in the world. And I love buying them." We hear his footsteps as he strides across the truck-stop parking lot, the sound of a truck, a door opening. "Buying records got me out of my shell when I was a kid," he says. "Believe it or not, I was kind of shy, and buying records got me out there in the world. And I'm so grateful." ●

Ryley Walker's *Deafman Glance* displays a more experimental edge to his songwriting, while showcasing his superb guitar playing

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The whole of the moon

The latest reissue in BMG's Art Of The Album series is a 50th anniversary revisit of The Small Faces masterpiece *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*. **Steve Harnell** goes looking for the other half of the moon with Happiness Stan. Are you all sitting comftybold two square on your botty? Then he'll begin...

Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake was very much a double-edged sword for the Small Faces – it's their greatest triumph, but also contained within it the seeds of their ultimate demise.

The record represents the band's entire œuvre in microcosm. In the space of just 38 minutes, *Ogdens'...* is a perfect summation of the East London four-piece's career, from feisty R&B to psychedelic whimsy, searing soulful entreaties to double entendre-laden music-hall knees-ups, it's all here.

You'll hear the 1968 record routinely described as a concept album, but that only applies to its second half. The opening side finds the band serving up an ambitious selection of standalone rock songs. They're on fire throughout – imaginative, funky and, most of all, impressively mature.

Key to the genesis of the album is Rolling Stones manager and Immediate Records owner, Andrew Loog Oldham. After two years of chart and gigging success, the Small Faces had nothing to show from their disastrous working partnership with notorious pop Svengali Don Arden. By 1967, they were virtually penniless, despite being one of the highest-grossing acts on the scene. When the young band told Arden they wanted out, he kindly informed their parents they were a drug-addled mess. The ruse didn't work and the quartet instead hooked up with Loog Oldham and the promise of unlimited studio time at Immediate. With their sights set on equalling the expansive creative vistas of The Beatles, Stones, Who and Kinks, it was too good an offer to resist. In an interview about the original Small Faces remasters, drummer Kenney Jones explained: "Immediate Records was like the Virgin of its day. It felt so special for us not to be connected with a giant record company. This was something a bit more off the wall. Andrew realised for us to go forward creatively, we needed more studio time. And that's what we got, endless studio time. We were very fortunate to have Glyn Johns with us, too. He was an engineer in those days. I got the greatest drums sounds of all time from Glyn. He was amazing. Without Glyn, we would have been lost. We were very creative and made a major breakthrough in our style [with *Ogdens'...*]. We were always desperate to lose that teenybop image, although I guess we were destined to stay with it, I suppose."

GAME OF TWO HALVES

Small Faces' eponymous album debut with Immediate proved their experimentation was worth backing, but the band pulled out all the stops for their fifth long-player.

The bulk of *Ogdens'* conceptual second side – *Happiness Stan*, *The Hungry Intruder*, *The Journey* and *HappyDaysToyTown* – was written during a week-long cabin cruiser trip down the Thames between Henley and Maidenhead by bassist Ronnie Lane, Steve Marriott and keyboard player Ian McLagan. In the studio, apart from a couple of days at Pye and some time at Trident, the remainder was recorded at Olympic.

In keeping with the ambitious new outlook, violinists and cellists from the London Philharmonic Orchestra were used during the sessions, led by Ian McCallum, father of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* star David McCallum. Although the LP may be intrinsically linked with Side Two's psychedelic fairytale, the standalone tracks on its first side are among the band's finest.

Recycling the melody from their flop 1965 single *I've Got Mine*, the opening ▶

"Without [engineer] Glyn Johns, we would have been lost. We were very creative and made a major breakthrough in our style"

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The Small Faces (l to r): Kenney Jones, Ronnie Lane, Ian McLagan and Steve Marriott

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WHAT YOU GET...

The 50th anniversary reissue of *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* will be released on BMG/Immediate on 28 September

The anniversary edition's180g vinyl LP formats have been newly mastered at half-speed and pressed in conjunction with The Vinyl Factory from the original Immediate master tapes, Olympic Studio session multi-tracks, Trident Studios and Pye Studios tape reels, alongside extra material from the archive of Kenney Jones.

A 180g half-speed mastered red, white and blue coloured vinyl 3LP boxset (Immediate IMBX012) boasts a new softback 12"x12" 60-page book. In addition to mono and stereo versions of the album, a third disc will feature unreleased material. The Art Of The Album 180g half-speed mastered black vinyl LP version (BMGAA07LP) features the stereo mix of the album and includes both a six-page booklet and an art card.

All formats include author Jon Savage's new sleevenotes, which tell the story of the players, the craft, the impact and the legacy of this much-loved album, plus many rare and previously unseen photos of the band from the archives of photographers Tony Gale and Gered Mankowitz.

instrumental is a swirling scene-setter, driven by Kenney Jones' skittering drum fills and McLagan's echoey keyboard figure – a world away from their early pared-down R&B pop singles. For the wonderful *Afterglow (Of Your Love)*, a tongue-in-cheek Marriott drawled intro gives way to a thunderous band performance and a showcase for the frontman's full-throttle soulful vocals.

Meanwhile, *Long Agos And Worlds Apart*, written and sung by McLagan, finds the Small Faces at their most wigged-out before it eventually morphs into something approaching their trademark R&B.

Quite how they got away with the single-entendre bawdiness of *Rene* is anyone's guess. A brilliant Cockney knees-up about a dockside prostitute, it also betrays Marriott's musical-theatre background.

In his autobiography *All The Rage*, McLagan explains: "*Rene* was a real Cockney groover and had some of Steve's funniest lines about 'the Docker's Delight', whose 'ship' came in 'every night'. Cutting *Rene* was easy, but we were rocking so hard at the end of the song, I ruptured myself and had to take it easy for a while. Minor health problems aside, we had a great time making that record."

Song Of A Baker, meanwhile, could be the group's greatest achievement – a superb guitar riff and a vocal masterclass, this time from the usually more reticent Ronnie Lane. Stevie turns his 'cor blimey guv'nor' persona up to 11 for *Lazy Sunday*. Hated by the band and including a cheeky snatch of the *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* riff, it was never intended to be a single and eventually became a millstone around their necks.

The whimsy of *Ogdens'…* conceptual flipside is an acquired taste and the specifics of its storyline don't stand up well to close analysis. It is, though, an endearingly wonky flight of fancy that tells the tale of Happiness Stan's quest to find the other half of the moon. He finds it by travelling on the back of a giant fly, only to encounter hermetic sage Mad John, who poetically informs them that "life is just a bowl of All-Bran". That's that settled, then. Modern listeners could perhaps view it as something akin to a CBeebies take on *The Lord Of The Rings*.

SURREAL DEAL

Spike Milligan was the original choice for narrator on the second side. When that didn't pan out, Stanley Unwin was suggested as a replacement and seemed like the ideal fit. McLagan called him "an inspired choice". "He was 'Stan', after all. As soon as he stepped into the control room and spoke, he had us all

"Stanley Unwin had us all on the floor laughing our heads off. Steve was screaming with pain, banging the sofa and begging him to stop"

TRACKLISTING

1. Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake
2. **Afterglow (Of Your Love)**
3. Long Agos And Worlds Apart
4. **Rene**
5. Song Of A Baker
6. **Lazy Sunday**
7. Happiness Stan
8. **Rollin' Over**
9. The Hungry Intruder
10. **The Journey**
11. Mad John
12. **HappyDays ToyTown**

on the floor laughing our heads off. Steve was screaming with pain, banging the sofa and begging him to stop. He'd say something that seemed quite normal, but it would end up as mumbo jumbo," McLagan recalls.

Earlier in his career, Unwin had been a BBC sound engineer. His act had an unlikely genesis. Following a night out with a BBC-producer colleague, the pair drove home and were stopped by the police. When Stanley's mate was questioned by the powers that be, Unwin stepped in and began bamboozling the officer with nonsense talk. ▶

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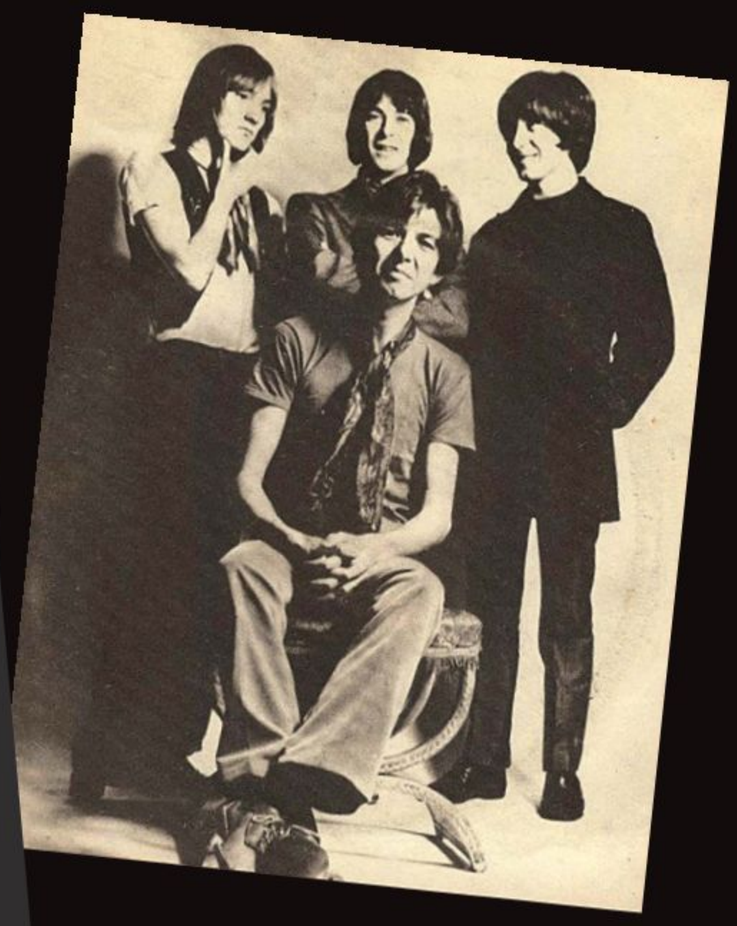

Eventually, a confused officer let them both go. The producer was so impressed with Stanley's patter that he suggested he make an act out of it, and the rest is history.

"[Stanley] sat quietly while we worked on the tracks, listening to the music and occasionally making notes of our conversations," McLagan explains about Unwin's work in the studio. "When he came back the next day, he was talking more like us than we did. 'How are you, man? What's bin your hang up? Blow your cool man'. It was brilliant, and it was us, but with a twist, and we were on the floor again. Steve and Ronnie already had an idea of the story, so he tried a few variations on the microphone, and developed it until the segues flowed naturally from one track to the next. We were in fits, because he never repeated himself, like a jazz soloist."

Central to the mythology behind *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*… is its innovative design, that upon first release was cut in a circular sleeve that replicated a tobacco tin. Lane came up with the basic tobacco idea and Marriott supplied the title upon seeing a scrapbook of original tin labels for reference, sourced by Loog Oldham. When Steve noticed one titled 'Ogden's Nut Brown Flake', inspiration struck. "That's it," he screamed. "Ogdens' Nut GONE Flake."

The title was, of course, a nod to the mind-bending powers of dope smoking, although the actual brand being referenced was a traditional rolling variety – Ogden's tobacco had been produced in Liverpool since 1899 by a company led by Thomas Ogden. McLagan's friend Pete Brown from The Muleskinners painted the psychedelic picture on the inside sleeve, assisted by Nick Tweddell, although neither were given credit.

WORLDS APART

Kenney Jones remembers: "When it went out to retailers, everyone was complaining about it, because it used to roll off. Nobody's shelves were straight in those days. Somebody said: 'Well, lay it flat and it won't roll off'. Then it warped all the records. You couldn't win."

McLagan adds: "For us, *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* was our greatest achievement, and it became our biggest-selling album, going to No. 1." A chart-topper it may have been, spending six weeks in the No. 1 spot, but such was the intricacy of the album's arrangements and conceptual structure, it was impossible to replicate live. The band attempted only a handful of tracks from the album at subsequent gigs and Marriott was resolute that they'd reached an artistic glass ceiling. He walked out of a "horrendously bad" New Year's Eve gig at Alexandra Palace in 1968, throwing his guitar to the floor on stage.

Marriott walked out of a "horrendously bad" New Year's Eve gig at Alexandra Palace in 1968, throwing his guitar to the floor on stage

Within three months, the split was official. Marriott would ply his trade – Peter Frampton in tow – with the earthy rock of Humble Pie. Meanwhile, a second Ronnie joined his former band, along with Rod The Mod. Out of the ashes of the band's pyre rose the Faces, but 50 years on, the legacy of *Ogdens'*… remains impossible to extinguish. ●

The 50th anniversary reissue features new sleevenotes written by author Jon Savage

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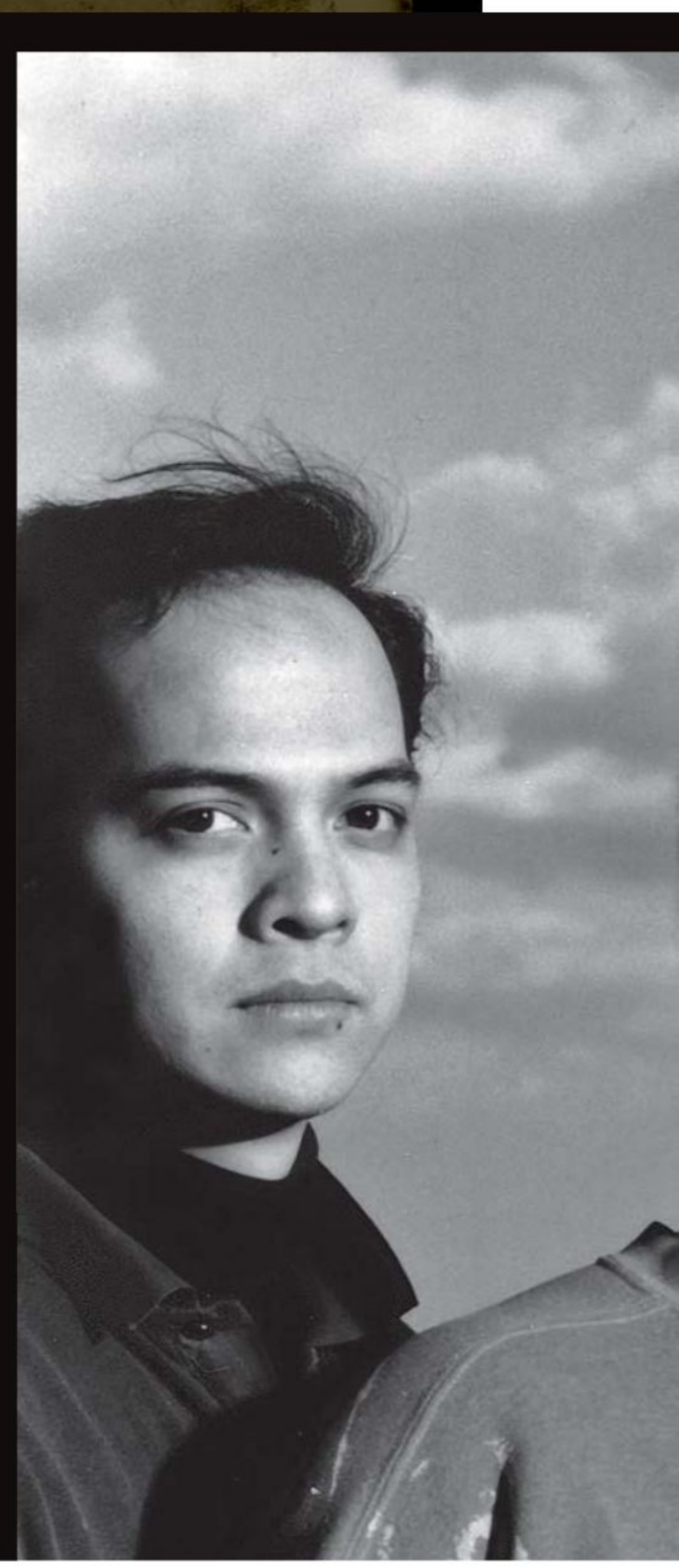

As 4AD releases a deluxe boxset to mark the 30th anniversary of Pixies' *Surfer Rosa*, **Gary Walker** speaks to the chief protagonists behind one of indie music's most influential and otherly classics. With contributions from Black Francis, Joey Santiago, Vaughan Oliver and Simon Larbalestier, *Long Live Vinyl* unravels the legacy of a stunningly dark debut…

A thrilling wave of mutilation, voyeurism, violence, incest, superheroes, venereal disease, primal screaming, Catholic guilt and topless flamenco dancers… Billy Corgan called it "the one that made me go 'holy shit'", PJ Harvey gasped that it "blew my mind" and David Bowie said it was the best music made in the 80s. Kurt Cobain admitted to ripping it off and said of first hearing *Surfer Rosa* he "should have been in that band". Pixies' debut album turned 30 this year and remains as timeless, dark, surreal, unsettling and captivating as it was when four goofy kids emerged from Boston's Q Division Studios with a scowling Steve Albini and the master tapes in hand, three decades ago.

In December 1987, the old order reigned over the album charts, with Rick Astley, UB40, Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney, George Michael and Fleetwood Mac dominating as Christmas approached. But a new disaffected, exciting alternative wave was about to break, led by Charles Thompson – aka Black Francis; Philippines-born guitar mangler Joey Santiago; Mrs John Murphy – aka Kim Deal, and drummer David Lovering. It would lead ultimately to Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, Radiohead and the rise of grunge – a revolutionary breed hell-bent on washing away the cloying excesses of 80s rawk and replacing it with something provocative, urgent and raw.

To uncover the roots of *Surfer Rosa*, though, we first have to dig back to the 17-song *Purple Tape* demo produced by Gary Smith and recorded and mixed in a total of just six days in March 1987 at Boston's Fort Apache Studios, using $1,000 borrowed from Francis' father. The band's then-manager, Ken Goes, sent the tape to a string of US and European record labels without sparking interest, before 4AD

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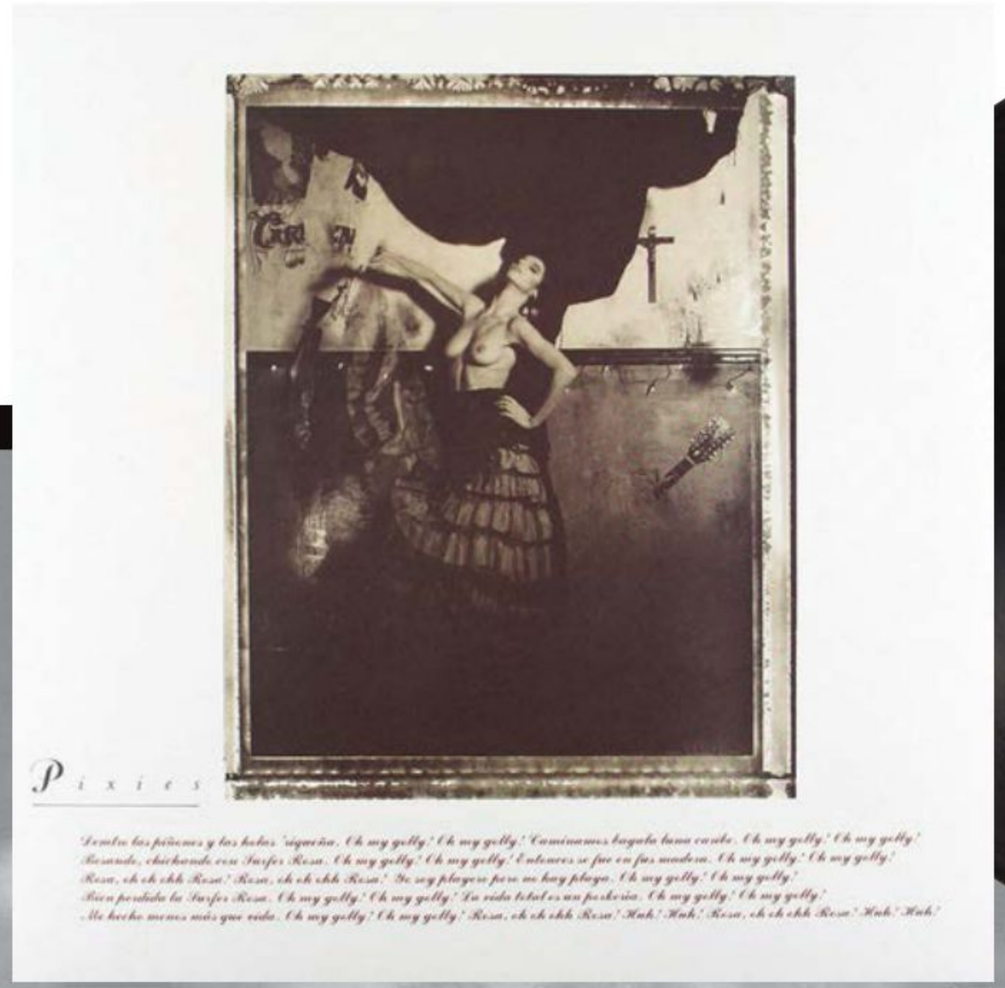
Surfer Rosa's iconic album artwork was a collaboration between 4AD's Vaughan Oliver and photographer Simon Larbalestier



The Pixies, circa *Rosa* (l to r): Joey Santiago, Black Francis, Kim Deal and David Lovering

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Millicent Harvey

Andrew Caitlin

Bassist and vocalist Kim Deal co-wrote *Surfer Rosa*'s only single, the anthemic *Gigantic*

boss Ivo Watts-Russell bit. Popular legend has it that Watts-Russell was initially unsure, but was encouraged to persevere with the tape by his then-girlfriend. Yet he later recalled of *The Purple Tape*: "I absolutely adored it from day one, because my day one was marching around New York with it in a Walkman. It was very exciting. It was the obvious things, Joey's guitar playing and the Spanish aspect to it."

WEIRD AT MY SCHOOL

The label's creative driving force, Vaughan Oliver, was dispatched to a gig at Rhode Island School Of Design to check out Watts-Russell's potential new charges. Fresh from creating the new edition's artwork, Oliver tells *Long Live Vinyl*: "Hearing them for the first time was *The Purple Tape*, and I didn't know what Ivo was interested in there. I didn't get it, and I wouldn't have signed them, but by chance or coincidence, I was going to the States on a flat-swap and I was there just at the time Ivo was considering them. He said: 'Go and see them', and I was blown away. Then I met them, and I reported back and said: 'I'm on board'. There started a 30-year relationship."

The 4AD boss offered to put out his pick of eight songs from *The Purple Tape,* remastered, as the mini-album *Come On Pilgrim*, named after a Larry Norman lyric that reminded Francis of Billy Pilgrim from Kurt Vonnegut Jr's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In a label who'd released albums by Cocteau Twins, Nick Cave's The Birthday Party and their New England friends Throwing Muses, Pixies found a welcoming home for their uncompromising brand of surreal, sexualised sonic fury. Decompressing on a hotel bed in Des Moines Iowa, two weeks into the band's current world tour, Francis' voice fizzes with enthusiasm as he tells *Long Live Vinyl*: "It was a perfect fit. 4AD was not all about the kind of mainstream popular music that MTV had become. I remember when Vaughan Oliver sent me the *Come On Pilgrim* sleeve mock-up. I was working in a warehouse, just down the road from the warehouse where Joey worked in Boston Harbour. Opening up the packaging and seeing that sepia-toned photograph of the hairy-backed guy… I'd just dropped out of college, I was really into art-film, I'd discovered David Lynch, so I was all about this kind of artsy thing. I didn't have much of an artsy vocabulary, but I just had an inkling that this is what I am, and the world I want to occupy, so when I got that sleeve, it was art with a capital A, and I quit my job that day. It was perfect. The hairy-backed guy…"

THE 4AD CONNECTION

The connection with the British label was similarly immediate for Santiago: "They were great. I don't know what would have happened if we'd got into a typical major record label vibe, but they were really artsy and creative, we could tell we were going to get along with them."

Watts-Russell later recalled: "They were friendly, enthusiastic, polite people who were just genuinely [thrilled] somebody was going to put their record out. I don't think they knew much about 4AD at all. The only thing I remember from my first meeting with them was Joey saying: 'All I care about is that you make me famous in the Philippines, because the chicks are really pretty'. That's probably the most I ever heard Joey say, really…"

With *Come On Pilgrim* released in the UK, 4AD warehouse manager Colin Wallace suggested former Big Black frontman Steve Albini to oversee the recording of their full-length debut. Producer – although Albini would later take umbrage at that title – and band met over coffee, and the sessions began the next day. Emerging from

THE PURPLE ONE

The self-released *Pixies* cassette collection, known by fans as *The Purple Tape*, is exceptionally rare. Recorded in March 1987 at Fort Apache Studios for a reported $1,000, it contained 17 songs, including *Here Comes Your Man*, *Broken Face*, *Nimrod's Son* and *The Holiday Song*. Eight of these early compositions went on to make up *Come On Pilgrim*. In the book *Fool The World*, Gary Smith recalls ordering 500 copies of the demo to send to record companies. A vinyl version was released in 2002 on spinART Records, containing the nine songs that didn't make it onto *Come On Pilgrim*. Copies currently fetch £25 to £40 on Discogs. A further release followed in Europe, in 2010, on Cooking Vinyl.

"IT WAS A PERFECT FIT. 4AD WAS NOT ALL ABOUT THE KIND OF MAINSTREAM POPULAR MUSIC THAT MTV HAD BECOME"

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the sewage-coated squalor of their Kenmore Square rehearsal room, the Pixies hit Q Division at a gallop, the 13 songs that would make up *Surfer Rosa* already sharpened to taught, burnished alt-rock perfection.

"We were pretty excited," says Francis. "I was excited the second that I woke up, and we were just really happy to be doing this thing we'd set out to do. It was like, 'oh, this is what it's like, you work with these people who've come from out of town…'"

"It was very quick," says Santiago of the sessions, which were completed in 10 days, with a budget of $10,000 – Albini taking a flat fee of $1,500. "Just because of the way we were, tick-tock, we gotta go, we don't have that much time. We were really well rehearsed, we were ready for that album. We didn't have any sort of pre-production on it. The first time I'd heard of pre-production was working with Gil Norton on *Doolittle*. We met Steve Albini at a coffee shop and that was it, we were in the next day. We were excited to get the Pixies on the map. We had the material ready to record, everything was written, way down the road. People were already excited about it – the people we played the material to, live – so it just had to get captured in an exciting sense, and Albini was a pretty damn good choice."

STUDIO EXPERIMENTS

Inside Q Division, the famously downbeat producer set about applying his 'anti human' sonic adornments to the already fully formed songs he would later describe as "blandly entertaining college rock". Francis, Deal and Santiago were encouraged to use metal plectrums; Francis' voice was shot through a guitar distortion pedal to frightening effect on the frantic *Something Against You*, eliciting the singer's delighted response of "I am one happy prick!". Meanwhile, Albini utilised every inch of the studio, preferring the natural ambience of small rooms to digital reverb, with Deal's *Gigantic* and *Where Is My Mind?* vocals recorded in the bathroom.

Deal's then-husband, John Murphy, has said of the sessions: "I remember them taking the amps down to the bathroom so they could record the large, large sound for *Gigantic*. Albini didn't like the studio sound, so they took all the Marshalls down to this bathroom, which was completely made out of cement, and that's where that big, echoey sound comes out of it."

Santiago, who commandeered Deal's Gibson Les Paul Goldtop to carve out the lacerating, angular riffs on songs such as *Where Is My Mind?* and *Bone Machine* (while Francis played a blonde Fender American Standard Telecaster), recalls: "The flashes of memory I have are being in a little side room, not the main room, with my little Peavey amp, and I remember him sticking these little microphones in it with a little roach clip.

"I remember doing *Vamos* and throwing things at the guitar, I want to say they were tennis balls… I just didn't want to have anything to do with a big, big, big solo, probably because I couldn't handle it [laughs]. My take on it was that mainstream guitar had a lot of typewriting skills. They were typing as fast as they could, and I couldn't hear it. The only thing that was impressive about it for me was the speed – how can they play so fast? But in the back of my mind, I was like, 'I really don't care'. It just wasn't my thing. I'm more like a classic-rock guy. You gotta hear some riffs or something you're going to remember, and that requires less notes."

CHANNEL SURFING

For Francis, too, the songs on *Surfer Rosa* were about allying themselves to a new counter-culture movement, rejecting the lazy indulgence epitomised by the bands Pixies watched on MTV, a channel that had begun the slide away from its initial "Ladies and gentlemen, rock 'n' roll" ideal towards a more sanitised reflection of mass culture. "It was conscious, but I don't know ▶

At the time of *Surfer Rosa*, says Francis: "It was a very upbeat dynamic, not weighed down by any bad blood"

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THE STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Vaughan Oliver and Simon Larbalestier tell *Long Live Vinyl* how they created the dark, surreal sleeve art to mirror the Pixies' music…

The *Surfer Rosa* and *Come On Pilgrim* sleeves were directed by 4AD artist-in-residence Vaughan Oliver, who had discovered Simon Larbalestier's photography after the pair had studied at the same college in Newcastle, before Larbalestier went on to the Royal College Of Art in London.

Oliver was searching for an image for the *Come On Pilgrim* sleeve when he came across Larbalestier's now-infamous 'hairy back' shot in his studio.

"As with all of the photographers that would come through the studio, somebody would strike me, but I would have to wait sometimes two or three years for a project to come up. Simon's work wouldn't have fitted the Cocteau Twins or Colourbox, but Pixies? Yes – bang on! So there it was, the answer to the problem on his wall – this man with a hairy back who was at once both natural but unnatural. There's something slightly surreal there, something slightly dark and an element of dark humour.

"There's a neuroticism in Pixies' music that comes through in the jarred guitar that I was trying to emulate or echo in the handwritten stuff on the cover. That's generally our philosophy: I'm not trying to define the music, I'm trying to suggest an atmosphere that is about the music."

For the *Surfer Rosa* sleeve, the pair started from scratch – with input from the band. As Francis tells *Long Live Vinyl*, the designer nailed the brief, recreating both the Puerto-Rican bars the singer began to conceive the *Surfer Rosa* lyrics in and the dark worlds he evoked.

"It had some kind of energy and the flavour of everything I'd distilled from my experience there, a somewhat sexualised culture, a colonial Spanish patina, Catholicism, really sensual. He called me a couple of times, and we talked and I read him some lyrics – some of my poor Spanish lyrics. This kind of Spanish flamenco dancer, topless with her hair tied up in a bun, it was all super-sexual, but at the same time, kind of formalised. That's pretty sexy, when you think about a person looking free and in the nude but at the same time, in formality. The concept of erotic, sexual freedom, mixed in with this kind of formality… it's almost fetishy. I liked it. A 22-year-old dude… this is great!"

"*Surfer Rosa* was a kind of weak conceptual link," says Oliver. "Charles was writing these songs in Spanish and I'm just thinking, 'what

Vaughan Oliver chanced upon photographer Simon Larbalestier's iconic shot for the *Come On Pilgrim* cover

Below, facing page: The new *Come On Pilgrim… It's Surfer Rosa* artwork shows the continuity between the two covers

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are the most traditional aspects of Spanish culture, not necessarily Puerto Rican?' so I could put these Spanish lyrics on the front and show a Spanish tradition but debase it; that was the idea of the flamenco dancer and her topless aspect, and showing a little degree of Catholic remorse on the back.

"THE CONCEPT OF EROTIC, SEXUAL FREEDOM, MIXED IN WITH THIS KIND OF FORMALITY... IT'S ALMOST FETISHY"

"All of this stuff was low-budget and we shot it in a room above the pub opposite the 4AD office. I had a friend who knew a girl who was a flamenco dancer and we built the backdrop, which was trying to recreate a Spanish bar.

"It's so funny, I show that to students today – I do a lot of teaching – and the students will say: 'What layer is that on, Mr Oliver?' And I say: 'It's a fucking photograph!'."

While Larbalestier remains tight-lipped about the identity of the hirsute model on *Come On Pilgrim* and the dancer on *Surfer Rosa*, he has clear memories of the shoot for the latter sleeve.

"I remember Vaughan mentioning creating the feeling of an old Spanish bar inhabited by topless flamenco-style dancers – bars where Charles would sit in to write his songs. The Catholic themes were already part of my own interest, from work I was making in Europe involving Greek Orthodox churches. The addition of the fish was an in-joke, as it linked to the image of the hirsute man on *Come On Pilgrim*. Chris Bigg found me a nice big cod fresh from a London fish market to photograph. It added a dark humour to the series, which was central to the music, we felt."

THEN COD IS SEVEN

"It was freezing cold, and the Polaroid film that I was shooting with was taking much longer to develop and began to semi-solarise. It was also one of the few times that I worked with electronic flash units, which I hate because I always like to work with available natural light.

"It was also a team effort and a new experience for me, given that I like to work entirely solo. Everybody enjoyed the day."

Oliver reserves his biggest compliment for Larbalestier, saying: "Simon gauged the atmosphere and for all of their stuff, I just thought he was a fifth Pixie. He's an ideal person to turn to, to visualise their music."

"At the time, it was very flattering – a huge compliment," says Larbalestier, "and had I been based in the USA then perhaps we might have forged some kind of kindred friendship. However, sadly, I don't see any relationship visually with their current output of music. But that wasn't my choice – it was made for me."

"I'd like to think the music and artwork haven't dated," says Oliver, "because we've always worked outside of time. We weren't doing anything that was on-trend: the idea was to stand out rather than join in, to do our own thing. I think what's happened with time, in the same way as 4AD's music, it has led to genres – in the same way that the artwork inspired people to work in that style."

Oliver and Larbalestier mocked up a Spanish bar backdrop in a pub across the street from 4AD's office in London

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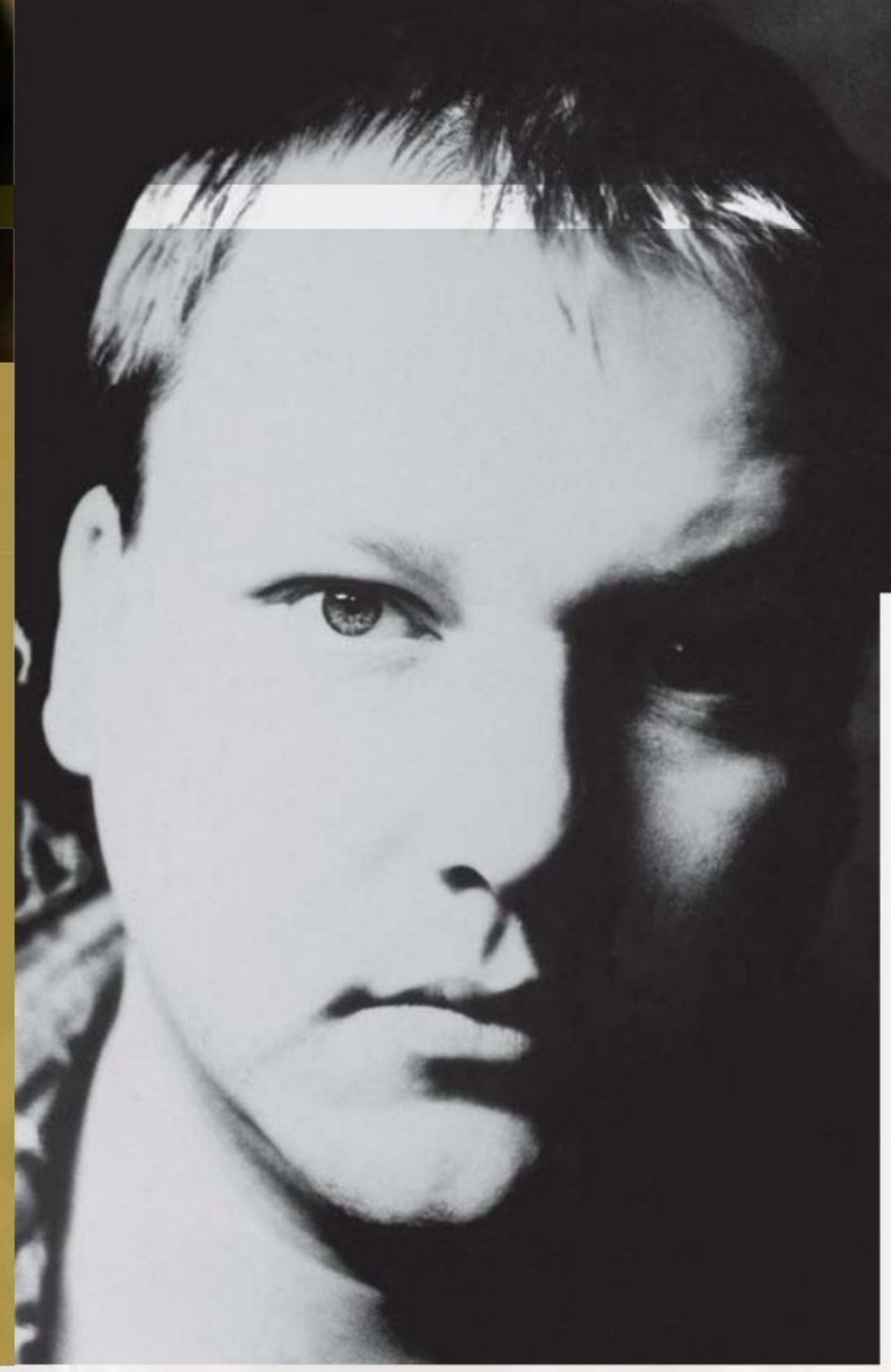

Andrew Caitlin

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID COME ON PILGRIM

***NME*, Jack Barron**
"These tales of dark lands and deeds are illuminated by smiling tunes veined with quicksilver flashes of guitar. It's this sleight-of-hand, together with a morbid humour which surfaces slowly upon repeated plays, that makes Pixies so addictive."

***Reflex*, Jay Blotcher**
"The Pixies have the eerie depth of old souls, yet their average age of 22 explains their eagerness to offend, to aurally jar and generally rock people off their mental axis."

"THE MUSIC IS UNCONVENTIONAL. THERE'S A LOT OF HALF-STEPS, CHORDS THAT DON'T THEORETICALLY GO WITH THE KEY, BUT IT SEEMS TO WORK"

if it became conscious when we picked up our guitars," he says. "It was more going to see bands, and recognising they were either on this side of the line or that side. A lot of the mainstream music seemed like it was trying to go there, it wanted success. To us, that type of mediocrity and flashy lame shtick wasn't cool. Then there was stuff on the other side of the line – cool bands, they weren't being flashy or trying to pander to some kind of audience, they were full-on, 'fuck you guys'. There wasn't an atmosphere of appeasement, there was an atmosphere of FUCK. YOU. Not necessarily trying to be confrontational, but this is what we do, if you don't like it, fuck off, I don't care.

"We were inspired by this kind of attitude of Us Versus Them. Our absorption of that attitude, mixed in with the fact that we were pretty rough-and-ready players, completely naïve, but completely willing to try, it all came very naturally. Even some of our songs that may have a toppy edge to them, a light edge – *Here Comes Your Man*, or *Where Is My Mind?* – that was clearly on the artsy side of the fence. All you had to do was listen to the lyrics… Oh yeah, you're not going to hear this on the radio!"

TABOO SUBJECTS

Those lyrics, which were inspired by Francis' exchange trip to Puerto Rico and influenced by the early work of David Lynch, landed in the popular musical landscape like an incendiary grenade. The vivid sexual imagery, incest and howled fire and brimstone of a writer whose family joined the Pentecostal church when he was 12 crashed into a subversive examination of Catholicism, a series of potent metaphors for the individual's own inner turmoil.

On *Cactus*, covered by David Bowie on 2002 album *Heathen*, the protagonist is found pleading with his love interest to cut herself up on a cactus and send him the bloody dress in the mail. On *Break My Body*, he's "the horny loser, crashing through my mother's door" and on *Broken Face*, there's "This boy who had two children with his sisters… who were his daughters… who were his favourite lovers".

Such overt references to incest challenged a taboo that had rarely been addressed in popular music, and Francis smashed through it, screaming and yelping with relish. And then there was the perfect collision with Deal's infectious basslines, poetic romance and sweet hushed nothings on *Gigantic*, which Cobain described as "the best Pixies song, and Kim wrote it".

"Charles' screaming with a sweet female voice underneath it, it's a good contrast," says Santiago. "I think it's great [Francis' writing], I think it's bizarre. I knew he was going to be moving into that direction when *Debaser* was going to be called '[Shed,] Appolonia', and then he just said: 'Nah, come on, it's too typical, singing about a girl, all that kind of stuff', and he started singing about a Dalí film [*Un Chien Andalou*] and slicing up eyeballs."

MUSICAL BOND

Santiago says the dynamic with his old University Of Massachusetts roommate was a natural one, lending itself to songs that shifted time signature and tempo at will and treated musical orthodoxy with contempt. "It's pretty amazing, because I always wanted to meet someone who wrote songs from outside the box. I got lucky when we met at UMass.

Above: Black Francis' lyrics were macabre, taboo and surreal in almost equal measure

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WHAT THE CRITICS SAID SURFER ROSA

NME, Mark Sinker

"*Gigantic* sounds like Rickie Lee Jones guesting with Pere Ubu to me. They writhe through The Band and Crazy Horse and (especially) The Fall as if they can hear some kind of history which links them all. They do more than sound like people who went before them – they force the past to sound like them… Rock America has given up on Like-Me-Like-Me populism, and some of us are beginning to love it as a result. As they say to themselves: Oh my golly! Oh my golly! Rosa, oh oh ohh Rosa! Huh! Huh! Rosa, oh oh ohh Rosa! Huh Huh!"

Q, Ian Cranna

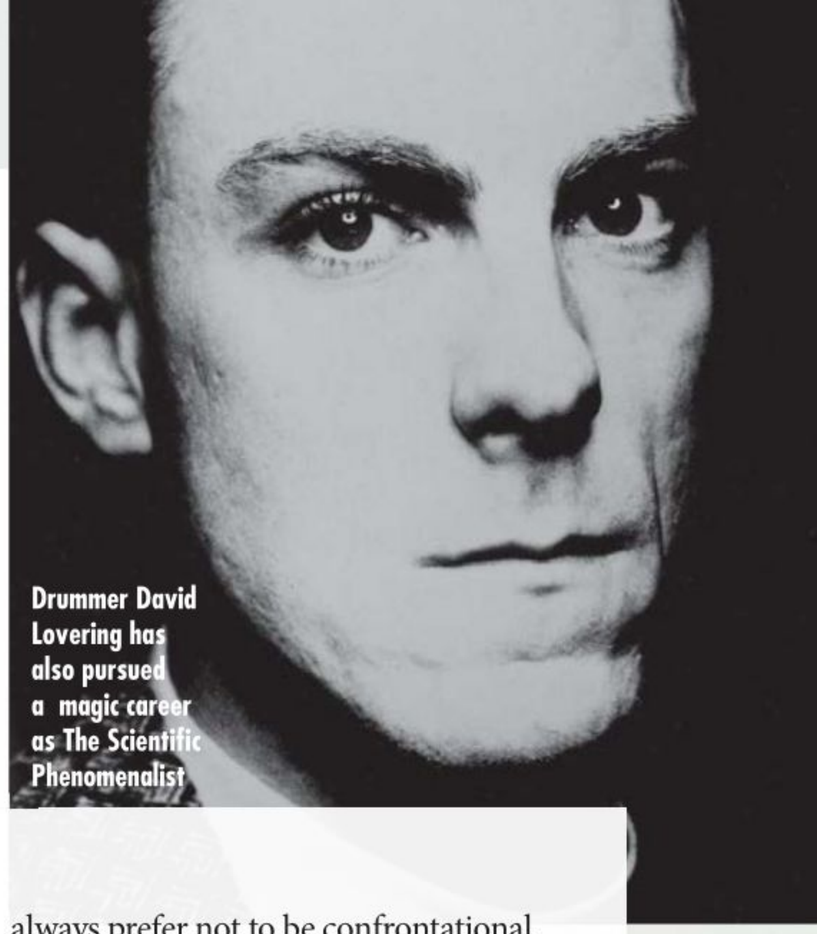
"What sets the Pixies apart are their sudden burst of memorable pure pop melody and an intuitive understanding of song dynamics that makes for positive enjoyment. The 13 tracks have short, uncomfortable titles but lyrics that go beyond the usual black nihilism into personal enigma and, I'd swear, a sense of fun. Not gelling their act together is almost certainly part of the whole point of Pixies, but if they're not careful, they could have a bright future in front of them."

I went to UMass knowing I wanted to be in a band. I tried in high school, but don't have the discipline to learn other people's songs. It didn't interest me, I'd rather make stuff up.

"The music is unconventional. There's a lot of half-steps, a lot of chords that don't theoretically go with the key, but it seems to work. We knock off two beats here on some line and not necessarily go four, so we have all these twists and turns. After a while, it got second nature to us – not counting verses in four, with chunks of four, we'd have chunks of three a lot of the time. Then we'd be like: 'This is the weird one.' 'Why's it weird?' – 'Because it's a chunk of four. Watch out, this is the normal one!'."

"Joey and I had a bond, the same bond we share today," says Francis. "To this day, we both still confuse each other. We might know each other really well, but I don't know if we really understand each other. We were bonding over this idea of starting a band, and you just kind of get on with it. For Joey and I, that dynamic has been there since we were 18 – it's still exactly the same. With the Pixies, we always prefer not to be confrontational with each other.

"With Kim, it was the same deal – I don't know if she understood what I was about, I didn't understand what she was all about necessarily, but we shared the same passion of 'isn't music cool? Isn't music amazing?'. That was enough to declare us – we're a band, we're playing a show on Friday night, we'll represent this idea of original music by an original band. It was a very upbeat dynamic, not weighed down by any bad blood. We didn't have any of that at that point, there wasn't any volatile chemistry, it was all good chemistry."



Drummer David Lovering has also pursued a magic career as The Scientific Phenomenalist

Andrew Caitlin

"BLANDLY ENTERTAINING COLLEGE ROCK..."

Albini delivers his verdict

Amid all of the superlative reviews of *Surfer Rosa*, one dissenting voice remained – that of producer Steve Albini. Writing in *Forced Exposure* fanzine in 1991, he called *Surfer Rosa*: "A patchwork pinch loaf from a band who at their top-dollar best are blandly entertaining college rock. Their willingness to be 'guided' by their manager, their record company and their producers is unparalleled. Never have I seen four cows more anxious to be led around by their nose rings…"

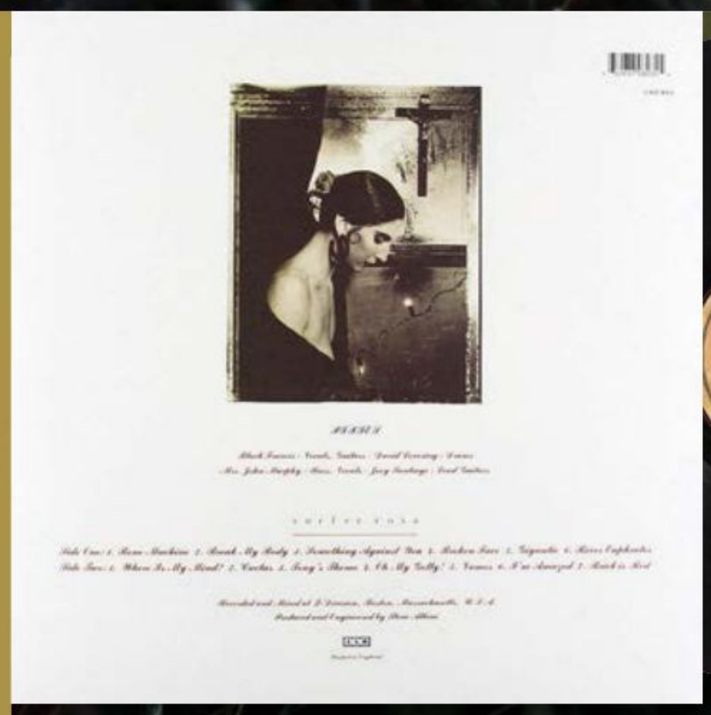
Later, he was more contrite, stating in an interview: "I said some unflattering things about the band in a fanzine and to this day, I regret having done it. I think making that Pixies record was one of the formative experiences of my professional attitude and I think I indulged a selfish part of my personality during the making of that record. I don't think I regarded the band as significantly as I should have."

Albini was unhappy at being credited on the album's sleeve as 'producer and engineer'. Francis remembers: "We thought he was the producer, I think there was a misunderstanding and later on he felt he'd been manipulated by the record company. Apparently, they had some sort of prior agreement that he was being hired as an engineer, not a producer.

"He probably didn't want to produce anything unless it met with his values. An outsider coming into the Pixies for the first time, you're not going to understand immediately what our values are – are these guys cool? Are they a bunch of dorks? Steve Albini couldn't quite tell.

"We liked working with Steve Albini, he had a lot of cool instincts, he definitely had a fuck-you attitude. He brought too much of that, from a social point of view. Having a coffee with him at the diner was a fucking nightmare… He'd be sitting there being fairly offensive with truck drivers and little old ladies who'd seen 10 times as much shit in their lives as he had, and there he was, flying the flag of antagonisation. Dude, chill the fuck out here, it's eight in the morning, we're just drinking coffee, we don't need to offend these people – they're on our side…

"We've basically kissed and made up many years ago, but these events are still kind of alive in my heart. I was so enthusiastic about that moment in our career, that was such a special moment, the thing had not soured. But that was the first real sour taste I got. That was my first disappointment and it came from a surprising corner. It probably made me a little more cynical."



Vaughan Oliver says the back cover of *Surfer Rosa* attempted to convey "a little degree of Catholic remorse"

From the moment Francis and Santiago formed Pixies – Santiago picking the name from a dictionary – then advertised for a bassist who liked Peter, Paul & Mary and Hüsker Dü, to recording *The Purple Tape*, signing to 4AD, making *Surfer Rosa* and embarking on their first European tour, before recording the follow-up *Doolittle*, was a period of just three years. In the foreword to the book *Fool The World: An Oral History Of A Band Called Pixies*, Chas Banks, the band's European tour manager, says: "It wasn't a rollercoaster ride; there weren't enough downs for that to work as a metaphor. It was more like a volcano exploding, or a huge storm. The Pixies' ascendancy was nothing less than a force of nature: unstoppable and relentless."

"It was strange coming out on stage and people were applauding," Deal has said of the UK shows that followed *Surfer Rosa*. "Fucking pissed me off. Why are they applauding? We haven't even played yet. We were doing the bar thing in Boston so much, and so used to nobody ever knowing us."

"I had nothing to base it on," Santiago tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "I could tell we did it pretty fast, and we got a great break, but I just thought, 'this is the way it's supposed to happen.' I knew we got lucky, because we rehearsed in a building where there were a bunch of other bands, and we got out of there really fast. It was a dingy rock space with sewage coming in, and it was nice to get the hell out of there. It happened fast, but we worked a lot for it. We were a 9-to-5 band. We didn't party around, we just went in there and banged it out."

Released in the UK in March 1988, *Surfer Rosa* was available in Pixies' home country only as an import for nearly six months, before Rough Trade began distributing it in North America – initially bundled with *Come On Pilgrim*. Elektra later picked up the US distribution. In the UK, its popularity grew quickly, with *Melody Maker* and *Sounds* naming it their Album Of The Year. It took until 2005 to go Gold in the States, and by 2015 had sold around 700,000 copies there.

RAW POWER

Ivo Watts-Russell reported: "The response to *Surfer Rosa* was times five [that of *Come On Pilgrim*]. The time between the first two was so short, it was all just this mushrooming thing. Nothing but positive feedback.

"I remember when I first heard *Surfer Rosa*, thinking I didn't know the Pixies could sound like The Fall. That was my immediate reaction, in other words, incredibly raw."

So, 30 years on, what is the legacy of this uncomfortable, shadowy thrill ride of a record that has somehow avoided the ravages of age?

"It's very good," says Santiago, laughing. "It sounds timeless. There's no bullshit or gimmicks on it and it sounds like four kids doing the best they can. We're doing what we

"IT WASN'T A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE... IT WAS MORE LIKE A VOLCANO EXPLODING, OR A HUGE STORM"

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love and it's been like that for so long. *Surfer Rosa*'s 30 years old and everything's paid off from all that hard work. We're one of the lucky few who can keep doing this after all that time."

NO PIXIES, NO NIRVANA?

Kurt Cobain had just formed Nirvana when *Surfer Rosa* was released, and he adored the record, crediting Pixies as the blueprint for his band's own quiet-loud dynamic and recruiting Steve Albini to record *In Utero*. "I was trying to write the ultimate pop song, I was basically trying to rip off the Pixies," he said. "I have to admit it. When I heard the Pixies for the first time, I connected with that band so heavily I should have been in that band – or at least in a Pixies cover band. We used their sense of dynamics, being soft and quiet and then loud and hard."

PJ Harvey, too, made a beeline to Albini's door. Thom Yorke said Radiohead following Pixies live at Coachella in 2004 would be like being supported by The Beatles. David Bowie was also hugely enamoured, saying: "The first time I heard Pixies was around 1988. I found it just about the most compelling music outside of Sonic Youth in the entire 80s. The interesting juxtapositions that Charles brought together of quite sordid material, at times… the permutations he created with the subjects he dealt with were so unusual that it caught my ear immediately.

"It's a cliché, but somebody once said that The Velvet Underground didn't sell very many albums, but everyone that bought a Velvet Underground album formed a band. I have to suggest that the same thing applied to the Pixies. Once you heard them, you wanted to have a band just like them."

Francis pauses, then balks at the lofty pretensions attached to the word 'legacy' when we run that stellar list of supporters past him. "I can't really speak to the legacy of it, because it's my record," he says. "I'm glad it worked out and those people found the record inspiring, I'm very happy about that. But even 30 years later, it's almost like I can't presume any kind of status. To me, I'm just kind of in the band, I have a gig tonight, so I'm still kind of in the same racket. While I'm very pleased the 'product' has a good shelf life, it may just be my uptight New England soul that doesn't want to get too emotional about it… I'm not saying we came from poverty, but we definitely come from a working-class blue-collar ethic – just gotta do the job, we've gotta do the gig, we've gotta practise our new songs so they don't suck so much… as opposed to [adopts posh voice] 'We are The Great Pixies.' We'll bask in the glow when we've played a show and the audience claps. That's our one moment to feel it."

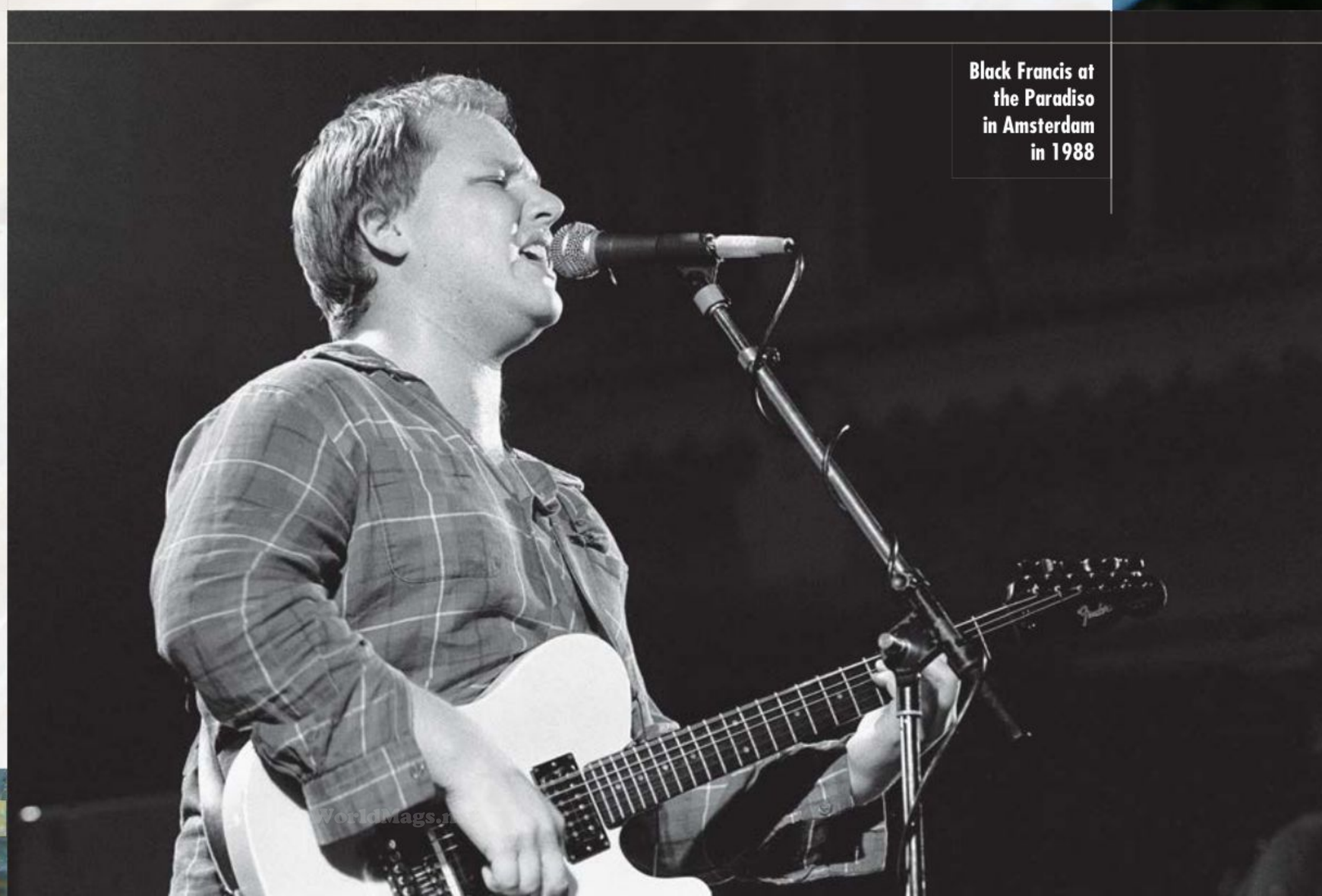
JOEY BELIEVES

"That's where the band's focus is," Francis continues. "It's very in the moment… It's all one big tour, one big record. We get to be in a band. That's our distinction, and we're proud of that, but it's very work-oriented.

"It's not that we don't delve into memories, but we don't sit around and have a big old chat. If we do, it's more Pixie-esque humour. Joking around about stuff, especially with someone like Joey Santiago. Joey named the Pixies! He's the one guy who keeps reminding us: 'Remember we're called the Pixies, and you know what the nature of Pixies are… Pixies play practical jokes, Pixies run off into the bushes and hide'. That's where Joey's at. Joey *believes*. Pixies are in the moment, they're not like [adopting faux academic voice] 'let's discuss the legacy of the band'. As Pixies, we kind of had to lose a little bit of our human side and adopt this other species – these little people that live in the forest. People in other places believe in this stuff wholeheartedly, and I'm almost inclined to think maybe there's some weird shit like that going on with this band, and we're loyal to that…" ●

Joey Santiago says of *Surfer Rosa*: "It sounds timeless… There's no bullshit or gimmicks on it"

Andrew Catlin



Black Francis at the Paradiso in Amsterdam in 1988

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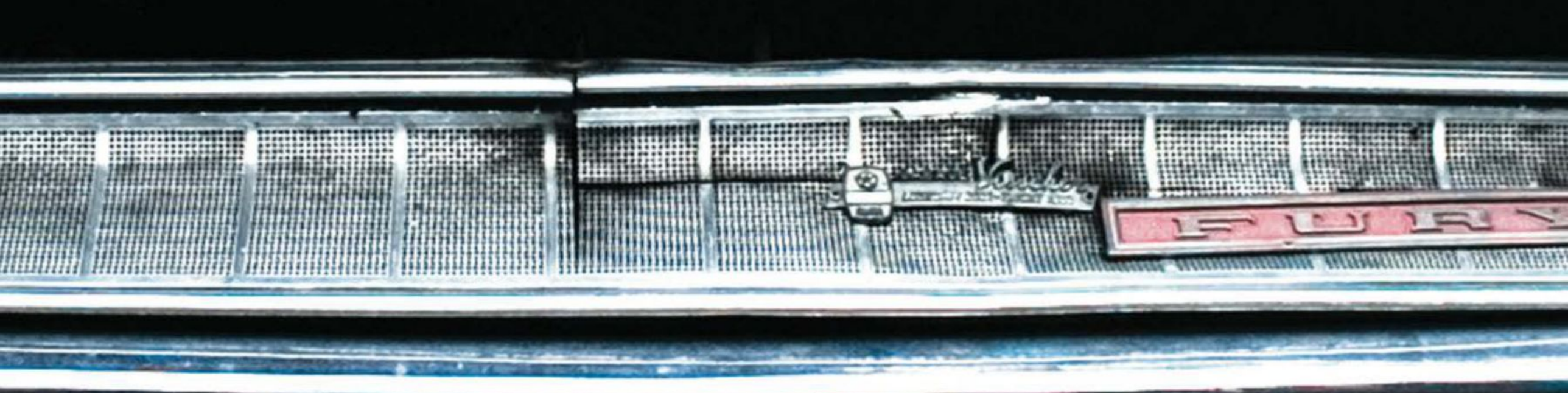

GEARBOX

FUTURE ANALOGUE

TOP GEAR

They've established a catalogue of stellar archive jazz recordings and contemporary releases, built a reputation for faultless vinyl remastering and even released their own turntable. **Mike Gerber** meets Darrel Sheinman, the man behind the Gearbox label

You've thrived as a trader in London's financial sector, then established a successful maritime security business… so, what do you do next? What Darrel Sheinman did, in 2009, was found a record label dedicated to producing quality audiophile vinyl.

Initially, it was something of a hobby for an audio enthusiast who in his downtime played drums, mainly in funk combos: "Because I played drums, I used to do my own recordings using cassette machines, overdubs, and playing along to one until the degradation got bad," Sheinman tells us. "I've always had a fascination with tape. My dad had a reel-to-reel machine I used to play with and splice with when I was a kid."

It was while attending an N.E.R.D gig that the yearning to start a label took hold: "They were playing with two drummers, they were so tight. I thought, 'this is great'. So I tried to get the rights, because my wife's best friend was doing the live streaming and video. But I was nobody, so no way would I get a licence to release that.

"So I went to the BBC and looked for rights I could easily get, things like radio broadcasts, and jazz for vinyl rights was easy. Hence we did the Tubby Hayes *Jazz For Moderns*, our first release."

Tenor saxophonist and vibraphonist Hayes was one of Britain's most revered jazz musicians, and the album was a first-ever commercial release of a 1962 broadcast. Archive-first releases continue to be a significant component of Gearbox's burgeoning catalogue; the latest such is Dexter Gordon's *Fried Bananas*, mastered from VPRO radio broadcast tapes recorded during the celebrated American jazz saxophonist's 1972 Netherlands tour.

Sheinman has equipped the Gearbox premises, near London's King's Cross station, with a combination of some of the finest vintage and contemporary studio kit attainable. The mastering studio comprises four reel-to-reel professional tape recorders: a 1969 Studer H37 valve three- and four-track 1/2-inch, similar to the machine on which The Beatles recorded *Sgt Pepper's…*; a 1965 Studer C37 1/4-inch 'interchangeable', again valve – reputedly one of the best-sounding tape machines ever – and a Studer A671, with interchangeable quarter- and half-track facility for playback of broadcast and domestic tapes where, for economy, both sides of the tape were used. This impressive quartet is rounded off by a 1965 ex-Decca-modified Philips Pro51 two-channel 1/4-inch tape machine with 30-inch-per-second tape-speed capability – not valve, but using sonically superior Germanium transistors.

Gearbox can therefore cover all formats and speeds – invaluable for handling historic recordings. Also acquired was an old EMT professional turntable from the BBC: "So if there's nothing left but the vinyl, we'll master off that, because it's got X and R outputs, it's got EQ," Sheinman explains.

HARMONIC DISTORTION

Given the plethora of recording standards employed in the industry since the advent of vinyl, equalisation is crucial when processing old material. The EQ suite at Gearbox comprises two mastering desks. One is a modern Maselec ("an amazing piece of equipment", says Sheinman); the other is an ex-Decca: "That's a one-off, which is all-valve, so we can do valve-mastered products".

Valves even figure heavily in the modern audio systems Gearbox relies on for monitoring purposes – all the amps are valve. So valves clearly sound better than transistor alternatives, in Sheinman's opinion?

"Definitely. More open, warmer, better separation of instruments… Less reliable than transistors, which can sound quite clinical. To be honest, a valve sound is more distorted – it's not distortion as people know it when you've got your speakers too high, but there's a second-harmonic distortion, which creates a sweetness that people like."

So does this mean slightly less fidelity? "It depends what your definition of 'fidelity' is; it's a more natural sound, more musical. ▶

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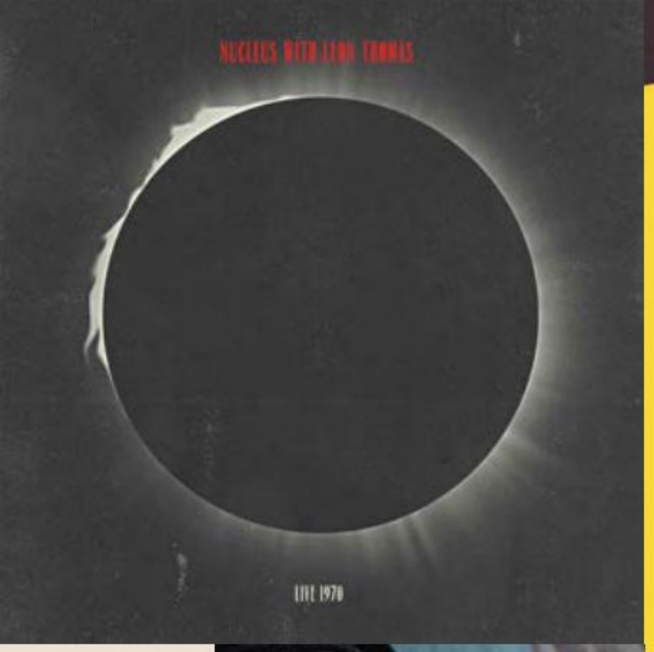
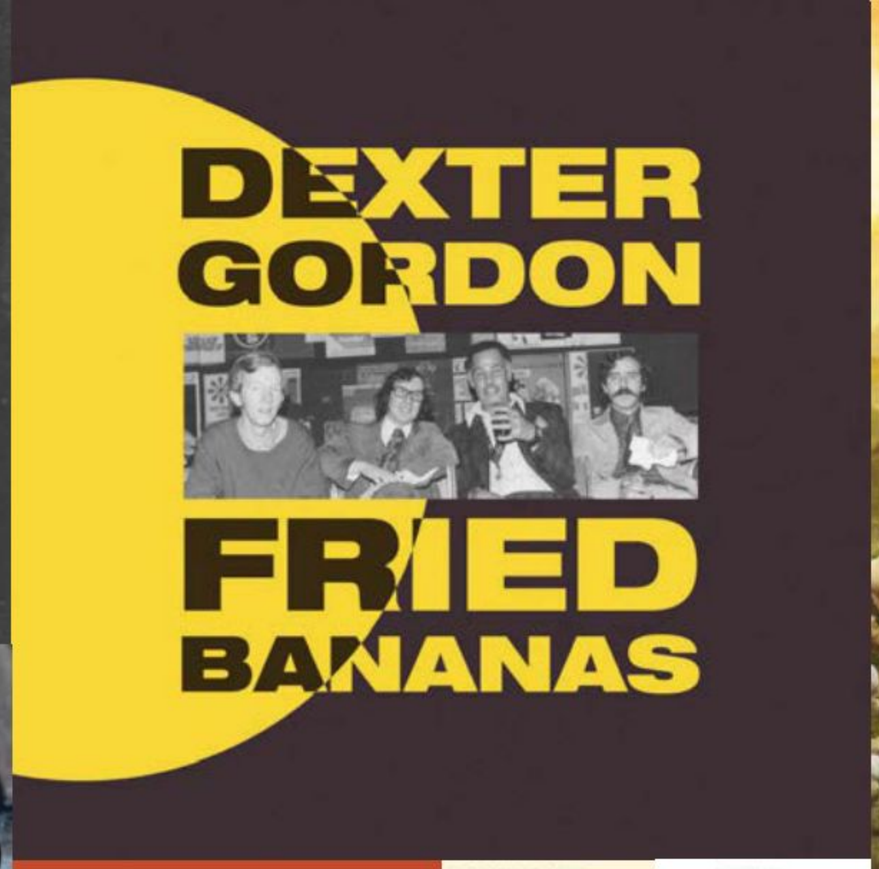
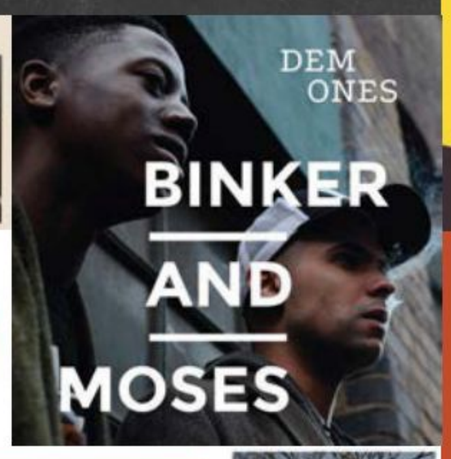

NUCLEUS WITH LENNY TRISTANO
LIVE 1970


DEXTER GORDON
FRIED BANANAS

BINKER ∞ MOSES
JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAIN OF FOREVER

The Don Rendell Quintet

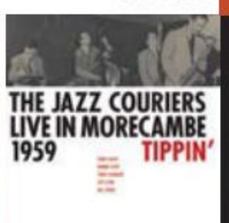

DEM ONES
BINKER AND MOSES

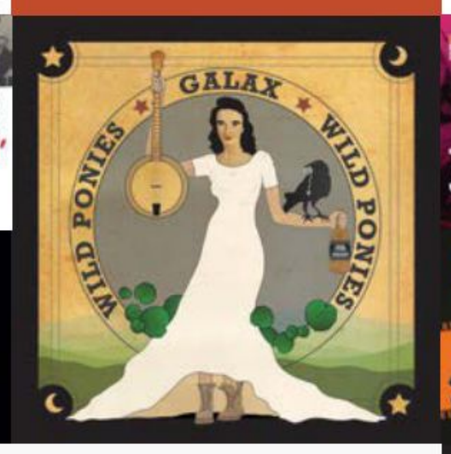
Jazz Poetry
SuperJam #1

RONNIE SCOTT QUINTET
PHIL SEAMEN QUINTET

My world, your life
J. Lenny Burrell

ORACLES


THE JAZZ COURIERS
LIVE IN MORECAMBE 1959
TIPPIN'


GALAX
WILD PONIES
WILD PONIES

THE JAMES TAYLOR QUARTET
BRAND NEW ANCIENTS
KATE TEMPEST

SUN RA
HELLO MR. SCHIMMEL

SQUARE ONE
TUBBY HAYES QUARTET
LIVE AT THE HOPBINE 1968 VOL. 1
THE SYNDICATE

KATHRIN DEBOER

LIVE AT RONNIE SCOTT'S
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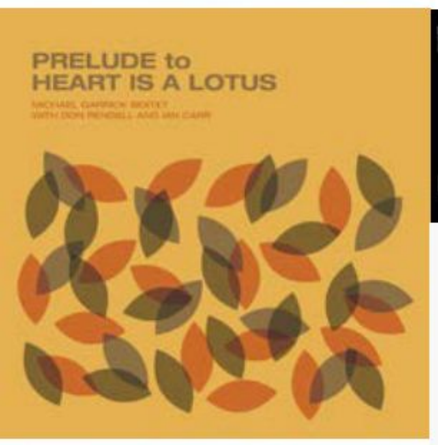
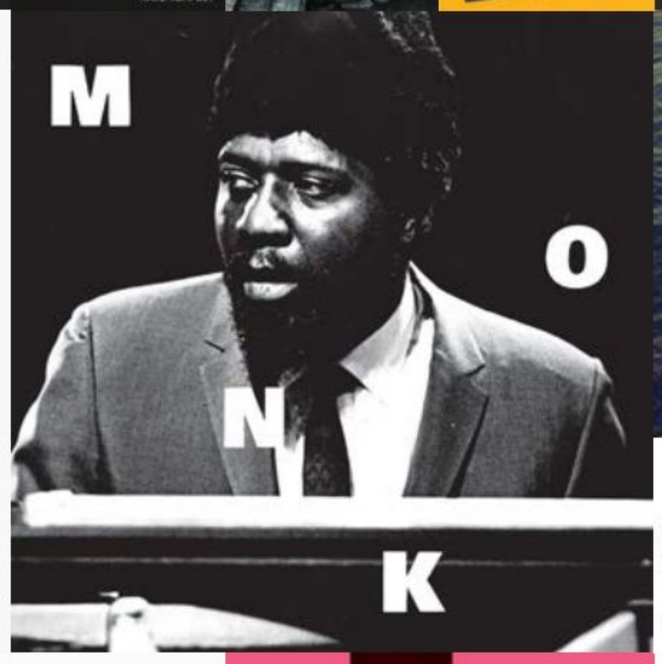

PRELUDE to HEART IS A LOTUS

NITIN SAWHNEY

DICK

BACK DOOR
BBC IN CONCERT

GB1509
Jazz Jamaica All Stars
Massive Vol.1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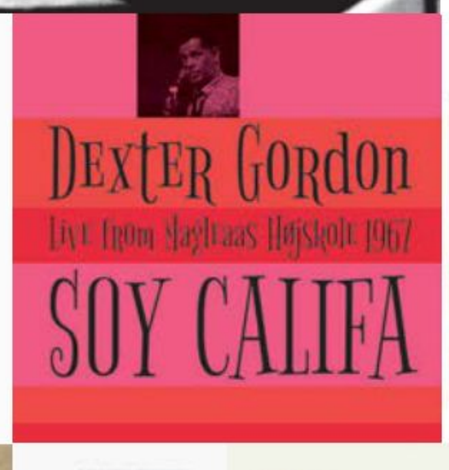
SASHA SIEM
SO POLITE
MAX COOPER
THE RONNIE SCOTT QUINTET FEATURING ALAN SKIDMORE

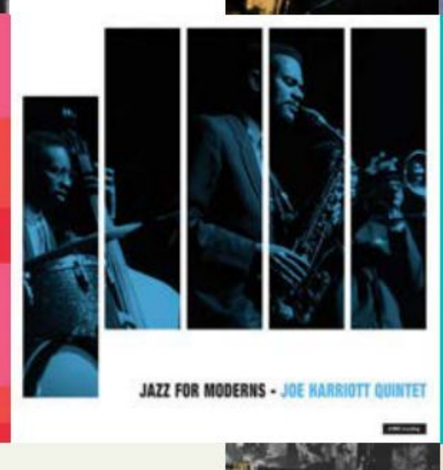
REVEREND EDDIE BONES
TONIGHT ONLY

BBC JAZZ FOR MODERNS

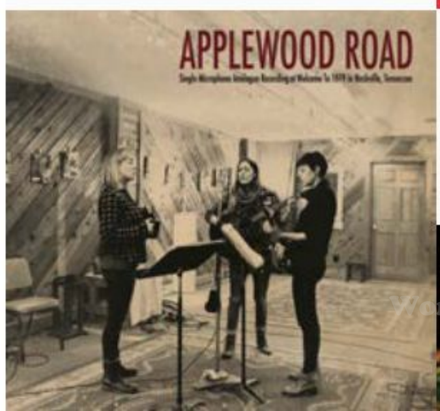
THE TUBBY HAYES BAND

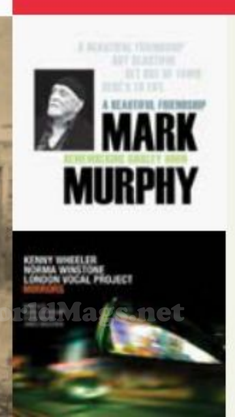
Jazz Poetry
SuperJam #3


DEXTER GORDON
LIVE FROM SLAGELSE FRISKOLE 1967
SOY CALIFA


JAZZ FOR MODERNS · JOE HARRIOTT QUINTET

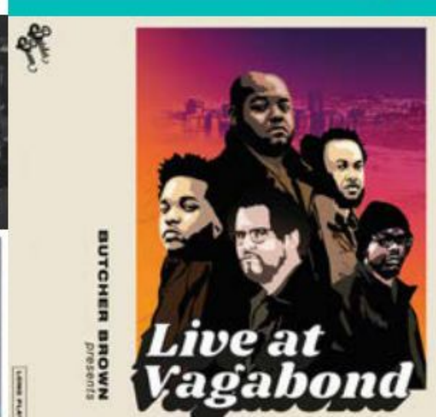
NICO
1971


APPLEWOOD ROAD


MARK MURPHY
KENNY WHEELER
NORMA WINSTONE
LONDON VOCAL PROJECT

BBC Radio 3
LATE JUNCTION SESSIONS
UNPOPULAR MUSIC
BBC Radio 3
23:00

THE TUBBY HAYES QUINTET
MICHAEL GARRICK QUARTET


BUTCHER BROWN presents
Live at Yagabond

Gearbox founder Darrel Sheinman

And when you're mastering, listening for hours and hours, you don't want your ears to go tired, because you don't master correctly. So I firmly believe we can do a better job mastering, as well as the sound being better.

"Here, you've got a blend of vintage and modern stuff, because this is not a museum; we're doing lots of sonic experimentation in finding the best blend to make the best sound – our original philosophy. So we have an old Scully [vinyl cutting] lathe, which is the same make as the one Rudy Van Gelder used…" Sheinman tells us he contacted Van Gelder, the late record producer, legendary for the technical excellence of his work, notably for Blue Note, to ask about technique and "he authenticated everything".

What started life as a sideline fast gained traction once Darrel decided, in 2012, to transform Gearbox into a full-time operation. "Having been an entrepreneur before, I know you can't make a business successful unless you make it full-time," he says.

He engaged Adam Sieff, who had been in charge of Sony UK's jazz division, as executive producer. "What Adam brought was an understanding of how the industry works, how records are sold, marketed, how you do your release schedules. My limitations were how the music industry worked. He and I built up the label based on this philosophy that it's all about high-quality product."

Sieff has since retired; Darrel has not replaced him, but has instead absorbed his industry nous: "Now we've got all that in our toolbox and know how to use it."

A further key appointment has been that of full-time mastering engineer Caspar Sutton-Jones, since the studio – besides its own releases – now undertakes a lot of third-party mastering for other labels and artists.

Great Scott's

While Gearbox continues to release notable jazz albums, two recent releases vindicate the label's embrace of other genres. Nitin Sawhney's *Live At Ronnie Scott's* is not jazz, but results from Gearbox's ongoing partnership with the club.

Sawhney is a virtuosic acoustic guitarist and keyboardist, whose songs draw on his Anglo-Indian background. The album features highlights from a three-night residency, including songs from his Mercury-nominated *Beyond Skin*.

Sawhney is backed by Aref Durvesh on tabla, Ashwin Srinivasan on bansuri flute and Eric Appapoulay on guitar – these three also contribute vocally, as do Eva Stone and Nicki Wells, with cellist Ian Burdge completing the talented ensemble.

"THE LABEL'S MOVED ON A BIT: WE WERE VERY JAZZ-FOCUSED, BUT WE'RE MORE MULTI-GENRE NOW, THOUGH STILL JAZZ AT OUR CORE"

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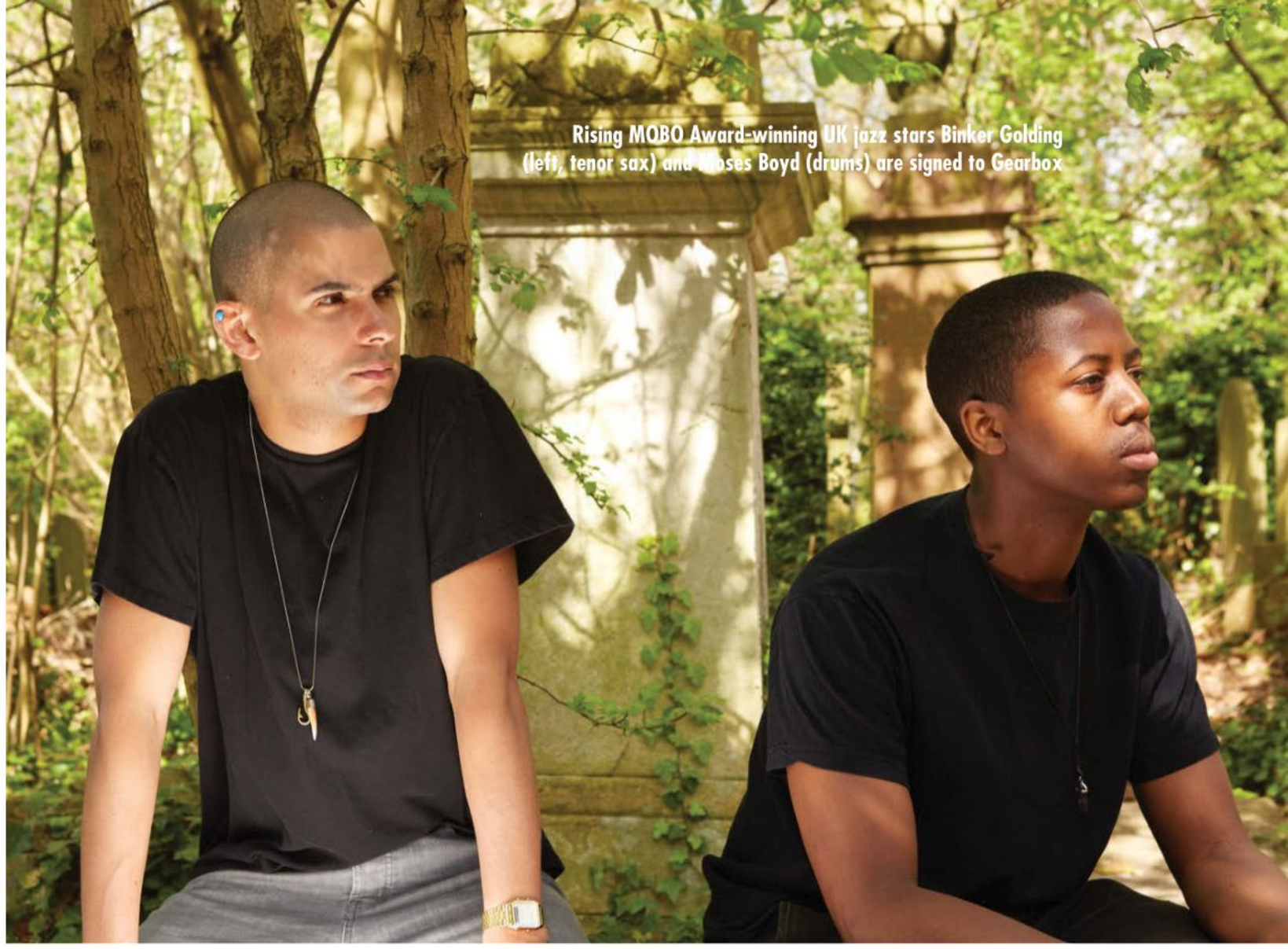
ALL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE

While continuing to unearth fascinating historical recordings for first-time commercial release, Darrel is increasingly signing up contemporary artists: "The label's moved on a bit; we were very jazz-focused, but we're much more multi-genre now, though still jazz at our core. In fact, we've become more jazz, but started to focus a lot more on contemporary living artists. We seem to be getting a good foothold in this new UK jazz scene – so we've got Binker And Moses signed up."

Tenor sax and drums duo Binker Golding and Moses Boyd's semi-freeform first album, *Dem Ones*, won a MOBO; their follow-up,

Gearbox's mastering operation is built on a foundation of vintage and modern studio gear

Glowing valves are at the heart of Gearbox's 'future analogue' philosophy


Rising MOBO Award-winning UK jazz stars Binker Golding (left, tenor sax) and Moses Boyd (drums) are signed to Gearbox

Journey To The Mountain Of Forever, notes Sheinman, "has really gone ballistic" in terms of sales and reviews.

Another British jazz artist Gearbox is poised to sign is Theon Cross, whose propulsive tuba blowing is über-contemporary. Before now, the tuba has mainly been viewed, jazz-wise, as the bass instrument in trad bands, especially in early recordings.

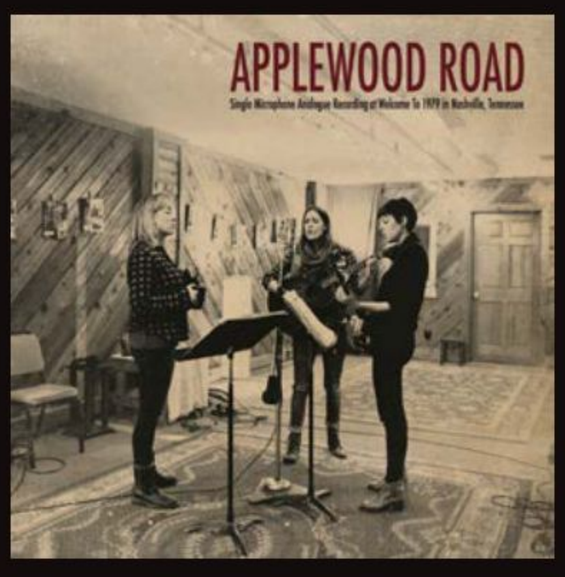
The label is also attracting American artists. "We've signed Butcher Brown, who are very much more funky jazz. We're about to sign Dwight Trible, a Leon Thomas/Gil Scott-Heron/[Terry] Callier-type vocalist. We're also building up a repertoire in Americana alt-folk: we just signed Ana Silvera; Applewood Road – that's beginning to do very well for us; and folk duo Wild Ponies."

Generic diversification is evident, too, on the Gearbox mini-album *Tileyard Improvisations Vol. 1*, a collaboration between electronic and techno producer Max Cooper, former Belleruche singer Kathrin deBoer and jazz trumpeter Quentin Collins. And the first release for a new initiative – Gearbox's *Valve Mastered Sevens* series that entitles

The Gearbox studio is equipped to master on all formats and at all speeds

Apple Records

Applewood Road's self-titled album is an equally impressive addition to the Gearbox catalogue. The alt-folk singer-songwriter trio Applewood Road – Emily Barker, Amber Rubarth and Amy Speace – recorded it round a single mic at Nashville's Welcome To 1979 all-analogue studio. Their songs evoke America's wide outdoors and cosy indoors, and the emotional terrain of love and loss; their understated interweaving vocal harmonies somewhat reminiscent of the McGarrigle sisters. The instrumentation is equally understated: their own, and that of top Nashville session musicians. The LP version comes with a bonus 7" single capturing Applewood Road live at London's Union Chapel, with their cover of R.E.M.'s *Losing My Religion*.



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Virginia-based instrumental jazz-funk combo Butcher Brown are making waves on both sides of the Atlantic, and are signed to Gearbox

subscribers to receive exclusive 7" singles – features rock artist Johnny Borrell, formerly with early-2000s indie band Razorlight. "It's indie-rock with a bit of jazz/world sounds," Sheinman explains.

"Adam used to say, are you a record company or a music company? We've probably become a bit more of a music company – vinyl-led, but we're not vinyl-only anymore; we now do CDs, digital, cassettes, all formats." Gearbox will even supply – at £300 a pop – reel-to-reel master-tape transcriptions of releases if, as Sheinman puts it, "people want that level of audiophile nuttiness".

"And," continues Darrel, "I was at the recording, so knew where she was in the room – slightly off-centre to the right. When we had the digital file back – which was 96 resolution – it was really clear, really nice, but in the soundstage she sounded in the middle of the mix. When we then converted it off that hi-res back to tape, for some reason her voice, where she was in the mix, was exactly where she was in the room. And the people that hadn't been at the recording, but that were at the mastering session, agreed that the tape sounded better. So that's QED." ●

Gearbox Automatic

Gearbox's dinky new portable turntable, with its inner electronics displayed proudly through the transparent casing, looks enticingly ultra-contemporary. Retailing at £499, it uses a Pro-Ject arm, an Ortofon 5 cartridge, set up optimally, and the platter is made of chunky glass. Under the casing, the belt-drive motor revolves the platter at 33 or 45rpm; the speed is adjustable electronically. An in-built valve phono stage means you just plug directly into your amp's auxiliary, and Bluetooth enables use with cordless speakers or headphones.

"No other turntable in the world does everything this does," claims Sheinman. "I've got patents pending on a chip we've programmed to tag the vinyl. So when you're playing a record, it knows what you're playing, sends it into the Cloud and we match it up against Gracenote. All the artwork and options are added to Spotify. The question that then arises is, what if you're putting on vinyl that's not in the digital domain? Each turntable's got its own identifier, so everything can be database-matched in future… We're taking analogue techniques into the future by not being closed-minded to digital, or to whatever the new future platforms are."

"REEL-TO-REEL IS ARGUABLY THE BEST SOUND. IT'S VERY COHESIVE – THE TAPE BINDS THE MUSIC TOGETHER… THERE'S A SENSE OF SPACE"

KEEPING IT REEL

The label's tagline is 'future analogue', yet some Gearbox releases are recorded digitally because, as Sheinman explains: "We don't record every frontline artist that we exclusively sign; a lot of them like to do their own recordings. So they record somewhere else and they give us the digital, or the tape, whatever their format."

Whatever the format, however, all Gearbox recordings, digital included, are analogue-mastered on the tape decks. Sheinman relates why: "Reel-to-reel is arguably the best sound there is. It's somehow very cohesive – the tape binds the music together. It's not like putting music through a compressor, there's a sense of space. We had one hi-res source for one of our artists, Kate Tempest" – for the Gearbox album *Brand New Ancients*, on which performance poet Tempest is backed by an electro-acoustic quartet playing music composed by Nell Catchpole.

Sheinman at Gearbox's Scully vinyl-cutting lathe

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the magnificent SCHEU CELLO

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“Scheu´s smallest deck offers attractive modern cosmetics, flawless finish and sonically inherits certain gifts from the dearer Premier model. The Cello clearly is no poor man´s job. Quite to my surprise, I was particularly impressed with the stock accompaniment of Rega 250 arm and Ortofon´s MM Super OM10.” **- Ralph Werner, 6Moons Review**

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COVER STAR

MICK ROCK

He documented the 1970s, working with some of the most famous artists on the planet, including David Bowie, Bob Marley, Queen and the Sex Pistols. **Teri Saccone** meets legendary photographer Mick Rock

Photographer Mick Rock's searing images have dominated pop music for nearly half a century. He's not only shot seminal portraits of countless musicians, but also over 100 album sleeves.

Rock possesses a larger-than-life personality but is devoid of pretence and remains self-reflective. An avid yoga practitioner, he's still got the fire inside. When we speak, he's just returned from Mexico City for a museum retrospective of his David Bowie photos. Despite being dubbed 'The Man Who Shot The 70s', he remains relevant and highly in-demand; recent subjects have included Lana Del Rey, Kate Moss and Father John Misty.

Michael David Rock (yes, it's his real surname) was born in London in 1948, one of three children. His father, David, was a civil servant. Attending Cambridge University on a scholarship ("my parents couldn't have afforded that education"), studying modern languages and literature, Mick began photography quite accidentally, while he was under chemical influence.

"I was tripping on LSD with a young lady. I picked up a friend's camera and loved the added intensity and explosions it made as I clicked," he says. He also realised that: "Rock 'n' rollers were the modern-day equivalent of the poets I was enamoured with, the English and French Romantics: Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Byron, Shelley, Keats and the American Beats: Kerouac, Ginsberg…" Rock's career progressed organically. "I wasn't looking to be a photographer. It moved into my life, set up shop and took over. This really wasn't much of a career trajectory in the late 60s."

Serendipitously, Rock found himself at the centre of both the glam and punk movements, and had a talent for spotting burgeoning stars, and an instinctual knack for photography, despite never studying it.

"I wasn't constrained by too much technical knowledge," he says. "I learnt as I went along. And often the mistakes I made turned out to be creatively positive! I barely used a light meter, would clip-test the film, and judge from that how many stops it would need to be pushed to achieve the result required.

"Without rock 'n' roll, I would not have developed as a lensman. I had no interest in being a fashion or news photographer. Music is what pumped my desire to pursue this.

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NIGHTMARE PHOTOSHOOT?

"Phil Lynott, 1973. I'd just met him. We got on very well. My photos appeared on the back covers of three Thin Lizzy albums. But it was my first time using a Hasselblad and I loaded the film the wrong way round. But he was very amused by it all and we did a great re-shoot!"

Rock with Syd Barrett in 1971

"MUSIC IS WHAT PUMPED MY DESIRE TO PURSUE THIS. I LOVED THE ROCKERS, THE POWER THEY PROJECTED ONSTAGE, THEIR UNPREDICTABLE NATURE"

I loved the rockers, the power they projected onstage, their unpredictable nature, the freedom they fomented. And I was game for just about anything then. I was not interested in a career. I wanted adventures."

STARDUST MEMORIES

Rock's work can be divided into two spheres: the more stylised, studio shots and those with a gritty, raw vibe. His album sleeves encompass both sides. "I don't do it much anymore, but back in the day, I was a wicked performance photographer. The covers of *Transformer* and *Raw Power* are both live shots. You learn how to do lots of different things when you shoot in a variety of ways. Back then, not many people knew much of Lou or Iggy. They were strictly 'underground'

Rock and Pop in New York in 1999

With Lou Reed in 1975

figures. Somehow, those two shots seemed to have defined the images of both forever."

What eventually led Rock to both Pop and Reed was his fateful decision to photograph Bowie in 1972 – and he went on to document Bowie's meteoric rise. "Somebody had given me a copy of *Hunky Dory*, which had yet to be a hit, although it was starting to percolate. I loved *Life On Mars?*, for which I made the video in the summer of 1973. Besides the music, I'd seen some pictures of David, with his innovative hairdo and wild outfits and I decided to seek him out, which wasn't difficult back then, as he was eager to get publicity."

One notorious image Rock shot depicts Bowie kneeling before guitarist Mick Ronson – what's come to be known as the 'guitar fellatio' picture. Many years later, in 2002, when they were collaborating on their first book about the Ziggy Stardust era, the singer told Rock the shot was merely him trying to 'bite' Ronson's guitar, not simulate oral sex as many presumed. "'At first, I was standing and biting,' David explained. 'But it was the way Mick swung his guitar that forced me to go down'. David immediately knew that this gesture would garner attention. As he came offstage, he asked me: 'Did you get it?'. David liked to stir things up in terms of his sexuality then, so the timing didn't hurt."

With Bowie in 1973

With a relaxed Freddie Mercury in the 80s

Mick and Joan Jett in 1982

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RELUCTANT SUBJECT?

"Deadmau5, until I showed him a copy of my book *Exposed* with a double-page spread of Tommy Lee from Mötley Crüe, who turned out to be a very good friend of his. Then he was ready to shoot."

Furthermore, the onstage pairing of Bowie and Ronson made them "the most fabulously beautiful-looking duo in music ever".

Rock's first studio experience was shooting Bowie in 1973, resulting in the famous 'suit and saxophone' photo. He took over 5,000 pictures of Bowie as Ziggy Stardust alone, reconvening with him in later years for more shoots. Rock was pretty much the lone photographer on the glam scene at the time, shooting the New York Dolls, Roxy Music and Cockney Rebel, among others.

"People ask me why I have all the best pictures of that era, and it's only because there were no other photographers around until Johnny Rotten and the punks stirred their own crazy publicity in the late 70s. Then the photographers came swarming!"

Rock resembled his subjects, which afforded him access to them. "I was very comfortable around musicians and it maybe helped that I looked like them," he recalls. "I never felt like an outsider. Many of them became my friends. But I always respected their talent."

He shot varied artists throughout the 70s, including Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, The Kinks, Ozzy Osbourne, Rory Gallagher, the Sex Pistols, Aerosmith, Siouxsie And The Banshees, Tina Turner, Genesis, Peter Gabriel, Thin Lizzy and Jerry Garcia during the Dead's lauded Europe '72 tour.

One of Rock's most beloved shots is the album cover of *Queen II*. "I didn't really know their music, but when they played me their album, I said: 'Wow, Led Zeppelin meets Ziggy Stardust!', which sealed the deal. They were a democracy except when it came to the visuals. Then, Freddie normally got his way."

PICTURE THIS

In addition to music photography for magazines, albums and record labels, Rock was the chief photographer on the set of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and directed iconic videos such as Bowie's *The Jean Genie* and *Space Oddity*. These videos are now lauded as timeless classics and have become as revered as some of Rock's still photos. "I recently lectured at the Brooklyn Museum on directing the Bowie videos. Not my photographs! I also did videos for The Kinks, McCartney and Ace Frehley in the 80s. I do these lectures, mostly about my stills work, all over the world. In Mexico City, 300 people showed up, to my surprise… There was a full house of 400 people at the Brooklyn Museum."

In 1977, Rock lived between his two "favourite cities, New York and London", where he shot the nascent underground punk scene. "The cocaine, girls, and the energy in New York sucked me in," he remembers. By 1982, his first wife had divorced him and he decamped permanently to New York. It was then that he first shot Debbie Harry, a muse and long-time friend. "She was so photogenic, you couldn't take a bad photo of her. Truly the modern-day Marilyn Monroe."

Rock makes no secret of his former excesses ("I snorted half of Bolivia"). However, the debauchery caught up with him and he underwent a quadruple heart bypass in 1996, featured in the 2016 documentary *SHOT!*. "It was an interesting experience and it cleaned me up. Now I use yoga, meditation and massages instead of chemicals."

His fame enticed high-fashion label Gucci to shoot their latest, edgy campaign earlier this year. "Gucci are super-hip. When they approached me, I was taken aback, but they were fans of my work. It was the Bowie connection which planted that seed."

We ask Rock what it is, in his view, that defines a compelling shot. "You want more than just a pretty picture," he replies. "You want something as strong as the music. A great photo should be like a hit single, something that keeps drawing you back for another look."

When he started out, rock stars were mythical creatures, so did he harbour ambitions to emulate them? "Not really. I had no musical talent, for starters. But I did have literary ambitions, I wanted to be a poet. For a moment, I thought I could be a lyricist."

If there's a singular thread running throughout Rock's work, it's perhaps that his subjects are portrayed with an implicit honesty, which he himself engenders.

"For me, photography is very therapeutic. It's still the biggest buzz I have. It gives me a very special high!" ●

"I WAS VERY COMFORTABLE AROUND MUSICIANS AND IT MAYBE HELPED THAT I LOOKED LIKE THEM. I NEVER FELT LIKE AN OUTSIDER"

With Bowie in New York in 2002

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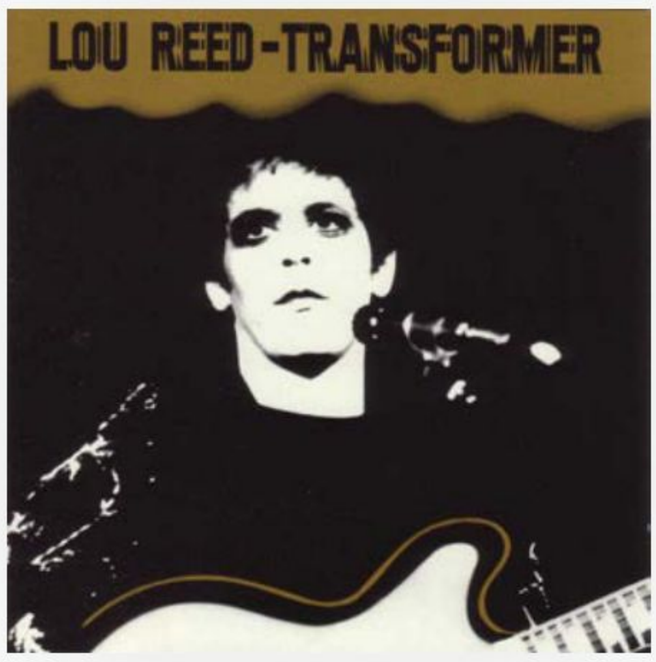
MICK ROCK

SYD BARRETT
THE MADCAP LAUGHS

"I didn't know what I was doing and the result is grainy, which made it look painterly, reflective. We wanted to use the shot with the naked lady in the background, but we (myself and Syd) were not in charge of that. We were friends for years, took LSD together. Syd had everything: the looks and talent. I'd photographed musicians before, but this was different. Syd was very charismatic and he had the aura of a *poète maudit*, which made him the perfect subject for me. This was my first important shoot."

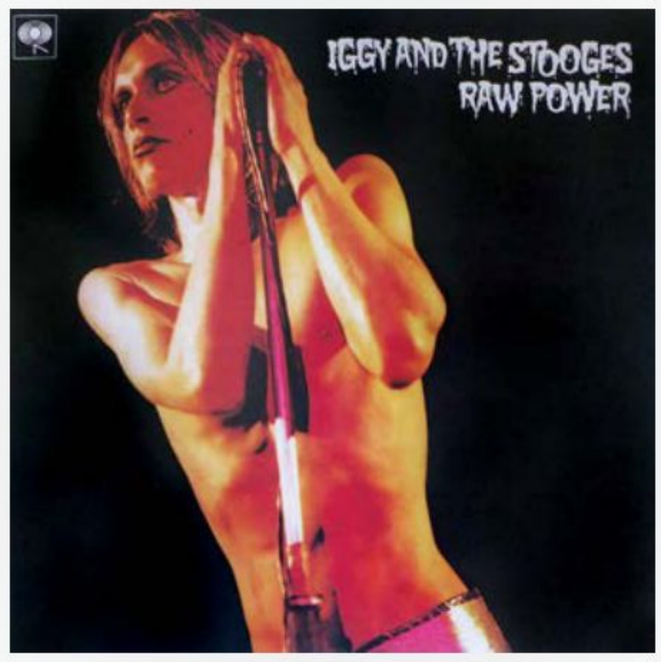
QUEEN
QUEEN II

"This was actually inspired by a photograph of Marlene Dietrich from the film *Shanghai Express*. When I explained the idea to Freddie, he got where I was coming from right away. We also shot it with an alternate white background, which ended up inside or on the back. It took time to set up those shots and I used a ladder to shoot from above, which was quite a feat. Freddie was the arm-twister in that band. He wanted to go for the black-background shot, and so did I. Freddie had gone to art college and it really showed throughout his career."



LOU REED
TRANSFORMER

"Iggy and Lou were subterranean, positively underground, when I found them. I saw Lou was a genius lyricist from the first album, which they couldn't give away at the time. I saw him as the Baudelaire of music. Iggy took a little longer to break out… Those were both shot a week apart at Kings Cross Cinema [now the Scala] in London. The *Transformer* shot was wrong technically and it fell out of focus in the printing. We used five different papers, but there's something about this image. *Raw Power* was shot using daylight film, and the orange hue came from pushing the processing button and using the wrong film. Both are live shots, both taken in between singing. *Raw Power* didn't rise to popularity until years after its release… Thing is, both covers illustrate I didn't think about what I was doing. I just did



IGGY AND THE STOOGES
RAW POWER

them. In the case of Iggy, that choice for the cover was made in New York while I was on the Bowie tour at the time. The Lou one, he had no hand in selecting. But I had done an interview with him for *Rolling Stone* around the time. I showed the prints to Lou and he picked the shot. These two musicians – including David – were these chimeras: part human, part animals, very exotic beings."

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MICK ROCK

RAMONES
END OF THE CENTURY

"The red background was a change for the band, who fancied grittier street shots for most of their promo pics. I was the third choice of photographer. They hated photographers and didn't like photos of themselves.They were difficult to shoot. Very stiff. Didn't move a lot. But this worked for them."

JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS
I LOVE ROCK 'N ROLL

"They (Joan and her entourage) arrived at my studio, at that time in Midtown Manhattan, around midnight, and we got a lot out of that shoot. I played around with backgrounds and we got a lot of photos. We eventually got the cover photo about 3am. Her manager was pushing the cuter side of her and I was pushing the darker side. This has got an Elvis Presley/rockabilly vibe with her expression, the hair, jacket... I designed the cover itself, too."

TALKING HEADS
TALKING HEADS: 77

"This was their first album and it was not the shot I would've chosen for the back cover, as this was not among my favourites from the session. Interesting music and people, but I do remember the proceedings and dealing with them being very civilised. They were punk rock, yet incredibly low key. But then they are ex-art-school people."

IAN HUNTER WITH MICK RONSON
YUI AORTA

"I shot it in my then-studio on Mercer Street in New York's SoHo district in 1989. They were both friends of mine... I saw them as two sides of the same coin. They'd been very close friends since Mick had done the arrangements on *All The Young Dudes*... I wanted to reflect that closeness in the photos. So I shot them together, but also individually. The resultant album shot was a fusion of two of the solo images... Although not as high profile as many of my other sleeves, it ranks as one of my favourites that I've shot." ●

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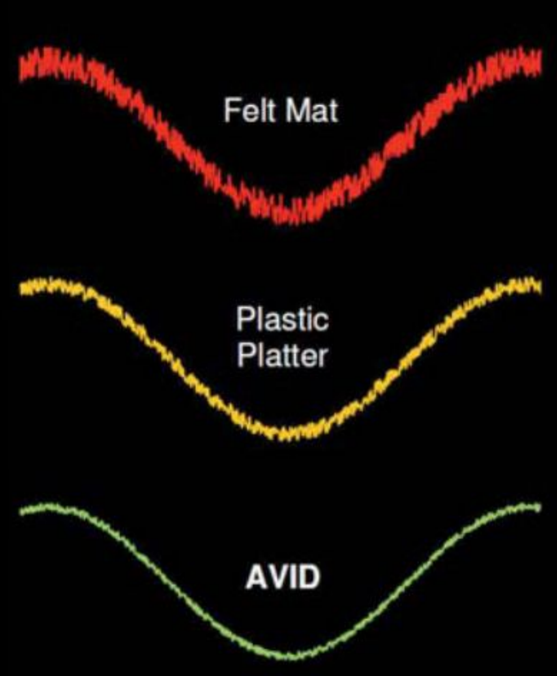

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THE ESSENTIAL POST-PUNK

Inspired by punk's energy, but frustrated with the movement's inability to expand beyond rock's traditional three-chord clichés, the post-punk bands we cover here were committed to exploring new sonic territories. **Gary Tipp** goes on a voyage of discovery…

Punk may have kicked down the door on the excesses of the mainstream-rock establishment, but it was the creative torrent of music that followed in the movement's wake that just might be its greatest legacy.

Post-punk is the retrospective term used to define this glorious outburst, and while the spirit of punk undoubtedly lived on in the music that was made after it fizzled out, the new bands were imbued with the fresh spirit of adventure and experimentalism to discover new avenues and create original sounds – ultimately, to finish off the work that punk had started.

Part of the job description was to keep twisting the knife into the body of rock's stricken dinosaurs. But while punk's strength lay in its embracing of a DIY attitude that confidently proclaimed anybody could start a band, where it disappointed was its innate inability to go beyond rock's clichéd three-chord fundamentals. With its fondness for 50s music and rock 'n' roll, in many ways, punk was happy to peer over its shoulder into the past for inspiration. The music the post-punks created may at times be challenging, but to their credit, there was never any looking back. Post-punk artists experimented freely within a variety of sonic territories, including dub, funk, krautrock, electronica, free jazz and even disco. They also gleaned ideas from art, literature, philosophy and politics.

The post-punk vanguard was led by a bunch of old punks anyway. John Lydon left the Sex Pistols' circus to form PiL; Wire went from angry punks to art-rockers over the course of two albums; while Howard Devoto left the Buzzcocks to form Magazine when the punk scene had barely begun; many trailblazing bands, such as The Slits, Gang Of Four, The Pop Group, Joy Division and Siouxsie And The Banshees wouldn't have formed at all, had it not been for punk.

These bands were followed closely by a second generation and, subsequently, the development of post-punk sub-genres: with new groups nailing colours to movements as diverse as goth (The Cure), industrial (Throbbing Gristle), avant-funk (A Certain Ratio), neo-psychedelia (Echo & The Bunnymen), No Wave (James Chance & The Contortions) and many others.

With this natural proliferation, post-punk could be defined just as easily as an era rather than a specific genre in itself. For this countdown, we've selected 40 albums that span from 1977 through to 1983, when the scene began to fracture beyond any meaningful recognition; but not before the path had been laid for the New Pop movement and the indie/alt-rock scenes to follow. These days, bands are still labelled as post-punk. However, this loose definition has come to mean, in the main, bands with angular, choppy guitars that have listened to Gang Of Four's seminal *Entertainment* one too many times.

We've set our 'rarest' and 'latest' prices according to UK vinyl releases, unless we mention otherwise.

40 Q: ARE WE NOT MEN? A: WE ARE DEVO!

DEVO (1978)

The Ohio oddballs' first and best album was produced by Brian Eno at Conny Plank's Studio in Cologne with additional co-production from David Bowie. Pressed on various colours of vinyl on release (yellow, blue, red, green, pink, purple, grey and orange), it features all the early hits, including *Jocko Homo* and the severely deconstructed *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction*.

Rarest 1978 Virgin, coloured vinyl **£25**
Latest **Out of print**

39 BEAT RHYTHM NEWS

ESSENTIAL LOGIC (1979)

Lora Logic was the squawking sax player in X-Ray Spex before a clash of egos sent her packing. She re-emerged with a group of her own and was promptly signed to Rough Trade, home of the band's only album. Later, Logic turned her back on music and joined a Hare Krishna sect with former bandmate Poly Styrene.

Rarest 1979 Rough Trade **£20 to £25**
Latest **Out of print**

38 GYRATE
PYLON (1980)

Legendary US post-punk band Pylon formed at the University Of Georgia and were one of the earliest acts on the Athens scene that later produced the B-52's and an indebted R.E.M. The band's rhythmic take on the spare, angular pop coming out of the UK earned them a great live reputation and spawned a danceable debut that had a huge influence on what was to follow.

Rarest 1980 Armageddon **£20**
Latest Out of print

36 A TRIP TO MARINEVILLE
SWELL MAPS (1979)

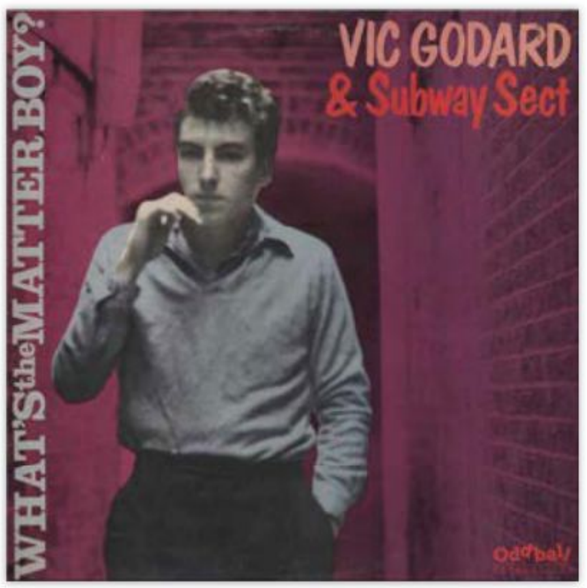
Formed by brothers Epic Soundtracks and Nikki Sudden (aka Kevin and Adrian Godfrey), punk's DIY spirit was alive and kicking on Swell Maps' shambolically discordant debut. Also present was the pure essence of experimentation, with Can providing a sonic touchstone. The brothers also cited children's TV show *Stingray* as an important influence.

Rarest 1979 Rough Trade, with bonus EP **£50**
Latest 2012 Secretly Canadian, US import **£12**

34 KILLING JOKE
KILLING JOKE (1980)

Dave Grohl's favourite band, Killing Joke were possessed of a harder edge than the other post-punk acts of the era. No less innovative, no less arty, Killing Joke's urgent in-your-face metal sound and intense vocals were to prove hugely influential on generations of grunge to come. These days, frontman Jaz Coleman is an award-winning classical composer.

Rarest 1982 Malicious Damage **£18**
Latest 2017 Caroline **£15**



37 WHAT'S THE MATTER BOY?
VIC GODARD & SUBWAY SECT (1980)

On the scene from the very start, Subway Sect were on the bill at the legendary 100 Club Punk Festival in 1976, along with the Pistols and The Clash. Line-up changes meant the debut album didn't appear until 1980 and, by then, the ever-contrary Vic Godard had dropped punk for an inspired collection of 50s beat.

Rarest 1980 MCA/Oddball Productions **£20**
Latest Out of print

35 PLEASURE
GIRLS AT OUR BEST! (1981)

Girls At Our Best! emerged from the Leeds punk scene in 1979 and the band's one and only LP, *Pleasure*, is an effervescent post-punk pop delight. Aside from the well-crafted pop songs, much of the group's appeal came from singer Judy Evans' piping vocals that provided a distinctive counterpoint to the rumble and thrash behind her.

Rarest 1981 Happy Birthday Records **£25**
Latest 2014 Optic Nerve **£20**

33 ELIGIBLE BACHELORS
THE MONOCHROME SET (1982)

The Monochrome Set were the jokers in post-punk's pack and provided an archly cheery antidote to the genre's gravitational pull towards the sombre and serious. *Eligible Bachelors* is a witty, bright and breezy collection of sophisticated retro-pop songs and includes impossibly catchy favourites *The Jet Set Junta* and *Fun For All The Family*. Joy Division, they were not.

Rarest 1982 Cherry Red **£18**
Latest 2014 Optic Nerve Records **£15**

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32 EMPIRES AND DANCE
SIMPLE MINDS (1980)

Before the stadium tours and brat-pack movie soundtracks Simple Minds were industrious post-punks searching for fresh directions. *Empires And Dance* and, specifically lead 45, *I Travel*, saw them look towards Europe and an electro-dance sound not a million miles off of Giorgio Moroder. It was a far cry from Jim Kerr's first band, the none-more-punky Johnny And The Self Abusers.

Rarest 1980 Zoom Records **£10**
Latest 1982 Virgin **£20**

30 SULK
THE ASSOCIATES (1982)

For their major-label debut, The Associates created a lush mix of post-punk modernism and arty synth-pop. United by a love of Bowie, Billy MacKenzie's soaring vocals and oblique lyrics were the perfect foil for Alan Rankine's florid sonic experimentation. *Sulk* even yielded a couple of chart hits, including the jangling piano of the wonderful *Party Fears Two*.

Rarest 1982 Beggars Banquet **£18**
Latest 2016 BMG **£18**

28 JUNKYARD
THE BIRTHDAY PARTY (1982)

Named after the Harold Pinter play, Aussie post-punks The Birthday Party dealt largely in carnage, chaos and comedy of the darkest hue. With Nick Cave's demonic vocals competing to be heard above a menacing and feral swamp of primitive rhythm and blues, *Junkyard* proved to be the band's crowning glory.

Rarest 1982 4AD **£25**
Latest 2012 4AD **£16**

31 THE ONLY FUN IN TOWN
JOSEF K (1981)

Named after Franz Kafka's persecuted protagonist, the existential Scots only managed one studio album in their short-lived, seemingly angst-ridden lifespan. Released on the legendary Postcard label, *The Only Fun In Town*'s scratchily radiant guitars and yelping vocals deliver a deceptively melodic, enjoyable and stupidly influential collection of tinny white-boy post-punk funk.

Rarest 1981 Postcard **£40**
Latest 2014 Les Disques Du Crépuscule **£18**

29 THE RETURN OF THE DURUTTI COLUMN
THE DURUTTI COLUMN (1980)

A spell as guitarist in Manchester punk-group Ed Banger And The Nosebleeds wasn't exactly the ideal showcase for Vini Reilly's experimental jazz-classical playing style. In contrast, The Durutti Column were the perfect platform for his singular talent. The first press of the album came complete with the Situation-inspired sandpaper sleeve and a flexidisc.

Rarest 1980 Factory, sandpaper sleeve and flexidisc **£250**
Latest 2013 Factory Benelux **£25**

27 AUTHOR! AUTHOR!
SCARS (1981)

Edinburgh's Scars are the great long-lost band of post-punk and *Author! Author!* one of its buried treasures. Fêted as the Next (Fairly) Big Thing and a John Peel favourite, the Scots disappeared as quickly as they arrived, in a puff of conflicting egos – leaving behind them nothing more than the glam-art statement of their glorious debut album.

Rarest 1981 Pre Records **£20**
Latest Out of print

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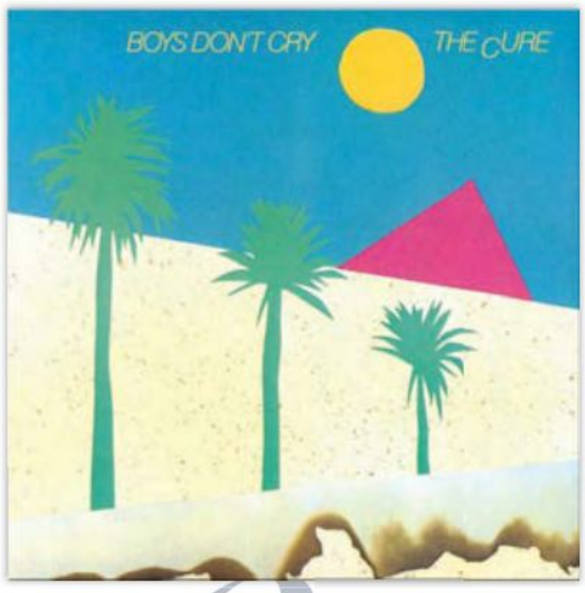

26 BOYS DON'T CRY
THE CURE (1980)

With the inclusion of three strong early 45s (*Killing An Arab*, *Jumping Someone Else's Train* and the lachrymose title track), The Cure's 1980 American vinyl debut was to all intents a repackaged and superior version of the band's first UK LP (*Three Imaginary Boys*). It was finally afforded a UK release in 1983.

Rarest **1980 PVC (US import) £60**
Latest **Out of print**

24 SEXTET
A CERTAIN RATIO (1982)

Taking their name from a Brian Eno lyric (*The True Wheel*), Manchester post-punk outfit A Certain Ratio would fill the floors of indie discos with their mutated art-dance rhythms. With elements of jazz, disco, slap-bass funk and even samba, *Sextet* is their finest moment – with the classic track *Knife Slits Water* its percussive centrepiece.

Rarest **1982, Factory, textured sleeve £25**
Latest **2018 Mute £19**

22 PLAYING WITH A DIFFERENT SEX
AU PAIRS (1981)

With its bitingly acerbic take on sexuality, gender and politics, the Au Pairs' powerful debut album is a largely forgotten post-punk classic. Hailing from Birmingham, the band took their sonic signals from Gang Of Four and X-Ray Spex, but the politics were all their own. Standout tracks include *It's Obvious* and David Bowie cover *Repetition*.

Rarest **1981 Human Records, with iron-on transfer £30**
Latest **2015 Sanctuary £20**

25 FROM THE LION'S MOUTH
THE SOUND (1981)

Caught in the shadow of Joy Division and label-mates Echo & The Bunnymen, post-punk nearly-men The Sound never managed to catch a big break. Why exactly remains a mystery, as the band's second album, *From The Lion's Mouth*, is a matchless collection of hooky, atmospheric neo-pop songs.

Rarest **1981 Korova, gatefold £40**
Latest **2012 1972 (US import) £20**

23 SONGS TO REMEMBER
SCRITTI POLITTI (1982)

The sophisticated blue-eyed post-punk of *Songs To Remember* was a far cry from the band's scruffy, low-key punk origins. Yet if ever there was someone to take you on such a journey, it was the fiercely intelligent Green Gartside, a man with the ability to chat with Jacques Derrida and pray like Aretha Franklin.

Rarest **1982 Rough Trade £20**
Latest **Out of press**

21 ODYSHAPE
THE RAINCOATS (1981)

The Raincoats' steadfast rejection of what had come before saw the band rail against the usual song structures and, as a consequence, *Odyshape* is a liberated jumble of free-form arrangements. This stance also meant not pandering to rock's traditional guitar-bass-drums axis, and all sorts of instrumental exotica, including the balophone and shruti box, appear.

Rarest **1981 Rough Trade £40**
Latest **2011 We Three £15**

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20 YOU CAN'T HIDE YOUR LOVE FOREVER

ORANGE JUICE (1982)

Turned off by punk's macho posturing, Orange Juice, led by Edwyn Collins, were a fey and sardonic bunch with a clutch of neat influences (The Byrds, Chic, The Velvet Underground) and a cool stash of charity-shop sunglasses. The dolphin-friendly debut near enough marks the birth of indie and remains a pure and ramshackle joy.

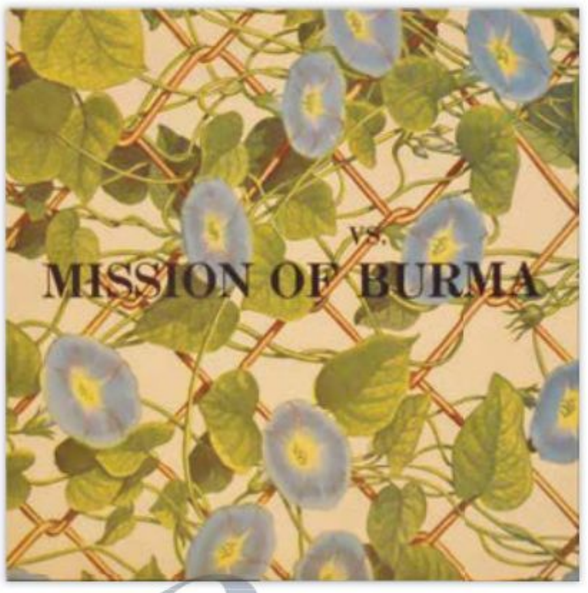
Rarest 1982 Polydor **£20**
Latest 2014 Domino **£18**

18 DECEIT

THIS HEAT (1981)

Occupying the strange hinterland where prog rock meets post-punk, This Heat created a distinctive breed of industrial electronica. *Deceit*, the band's second and final album, is now regarded as a post-punk classic, though very few people bought it at the time. The band occupied a disused refrigerated storeroom at an abandoned meat-pie factory to record the album.

Rarest 1981 Rough Trade Japanese promo **£130**
Latest 2016 Modern Classics US import **£25**



16 VS.

MISSION OF BURMA (1982)

Boston's preppy-punksters were huge anglophiles, and the band's abrasive experimentalism owes a sonic debt to Wire and early PIL. *Vs.*, MOB's first studio album, was an intelligent combination of extreme noise and alluring melody. Sadly, their career was nipped in the bud by guitarist Roger Miller's severe problems with tinnitus, exacerbated by the ridiculous volume of their live shows.

Rarest 1982 Ace Of Hearts (US import) **£45**
Latest 2017 Matador **£18**

19 20 JAZZ FUNK GREATS

THROBBING GRISTLE (1979)

The nihilistic synth-shockers reined in the industrial-noise excesses of previous albums and replaced them with the fractured strains of nastily mutated electro-pop. Stealing an album title from Level 42, the sleeve presents a normcore version of the band posing close to the edge of the notorious Beachy Head suicide spot.

Rarest 1979 Industrial, first 5,000 with poster **£100**
Latest 2017 Mute **£20**

17 KILIMANJARO

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES (1980)

Arch Drood in waiting, Julian Cope was the lysergic lynchpin of one of the key groups to arise from Liverpool's neo-psychedelia scene of the late 70s. Augmented by a horn section and loaded with killer pop songs, their mountainous debut is an off-kilter slice of post-punk heaven. Bold and brassy hit single *Reward* appeared on reissued versions of the album.

Rarest 1980 Mercury **£20**
Latest Out of print

15 CROCODILES

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN (1980)

The sparse neo-psychedelic sound of the Bunnymen's debut album established them as the cool poster boys of the UK post-punk scene. Ian McCulloch's masterly Morrison-esque vocals and Will Sergeant's inventive guitar combine to deliver a statement of grand intent. This was the starting point for 80s indie rock: sadly, some group called U2 stole the template and ran off with it.

Rarest 1980, Korova, with 7" **£35**
Latest 2013 Korova **£15**

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14 RED MECCA

CABARET VOLTAIRE (1981)

With a blanket of industrial white noise and cut-up tape experiments, the first two Cabaret Voltaire albums broke new ground, but were fragmented affairs. Drenched in a pervading sense of paranoia and unease, the missing sense of cohesion was added to studio album number three – and *Red Mecca* remains the Cabs' early defining statement.

Rarest **1981 Rough Trade £20**
Latest **2013 Mute £25**

13 THE MODERN DANCE

PERE UBU (1978)

Pere Ubu's own singular brand of post-punk gleefully mixed garage rock with arty experimentation to produce a glorious avant-garde racket. The first track, *Non-alignment Pact*, opens with a disconcerting high-pitch screech before morphing into something akin to an early Chuck Berry 45, and it is this artful, genre-warping subversion that renders the album a thing of wonder.

Rarest **1978 Blank £40**
Latest **2015 Fire £20**

12 THE SCREAM

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES (1978)

Following on from non-album track *Hong Kong Garden*, *The Scream* is a landmark album in the history of post-punk. With a collection of songs inspired by the heavyweight literary touchstones of William Burroughs and J.G. Ballard, the Banshees' atmospheric debut was a million miles away from the deliberate artlessness of punk.

Rarest **1978 Polydor £25**
Latest **2016 Polydor, picture disc £20**

NEW YORK'S NO WAVE

NYC's reaction to punk's limitations

To all intents and purposes, New York punk fizzled out in 1978 and in its wake came the short-lived No Wave movement. Existing in parallel with the UK post-punk scene, it was a direct reaction against punk's obvious limitations, with the adoption of non-rock genres such as free jazz, reggae and funk at its core.

The repetitive synthesiser-driven music of Suicide, who formed back in 1970, was a primary influence in the development of the scene. Their self-titled debut, released in 1977, is an essential purchase and tells you all that you need to know about the band (Red Star/Bronze, £30).

In many ways, James Chance & The Contortions were the quintessential No Wave group, and the band's twisted modification of funk and free-jazz is best sampled on the influential debut, *Buy* (£25), released on the scene's defining label, Ze.

Led by the irrepressible Lydia Lunch, Teenage Jesus And The Jerks were a formidable presence on the No Wave scene. With punk on its knees, the band's furious sonic assaults were launched to make sure it didn't get up again. Try Cherry Red's compilation *Shut Up And Bleed* (£30) if you're brave enough.

Other associated bands include art darlings DNA (*DNA On DNA*, £40, US import), the freeform Mars (*78*, Widowspeak, £35 to £40) dance-punks Liquid Liquid (*Liquid Liquid*, Mo' Wax, £30) and the funky ESG (*Come Away With ESG*, Soul Jazz, £50).

11 GROTESQUE (AFTER THE GRAMME)

THE FALL (1980)

Mark E Smith, the hip priest of Prestwich, was always far too sharp and gobby to be limited by punk's confines. Backed by the band's trademark fractured 'country 'n' northern' sound, *Grotesque* provides the ideal canvas for Smith and his witheringly caustic wit to put the boot into all he surveys. It was the band's third album and first masterpiece.

Rarest **1980 Rough Trade £25**
Latest **2017 Let Them Eat Vinyl £18**

10 REAL LIFE
MAGAZINE (1978)

The restless Howard Devoto left the Buzzcocks to form Magazine before punk had really begun. The post-punk early adopters were responsible for one of the genre's defining 45s, *Shot By Both Sides*, before their debut album hit the racks. With echoes of early Roxy Music, *Real Life* possessed a fully realised intellectual depth and swagger.

Rarest 1978 Virgin **£20**
Latest 2018 Virgin **£18**

9 Y
THE POP GROUP (1979)

The Pop Group took punk's raw energy and bunged it into a blender along with dub, free-jazz, funk and tribal rhythms. The result was served up on debut *Y*, a landmark of post-punk at its most experimental, challenging and primal. Needless to say, the album sold sod all, and the band were dropped swiftly by their record label.

Rarest 1979 Radar, with poster **£70**
Latest Out of print

8 CHAIRS MISSING
WIRE (1978)

Debut album *Pink Flag* witnessed the skinny art-school boys masquerading as angry punks; but for the follow-up, *Chairs Missing*, the façade was dropped and the band's inventiveness was allowed to flourish. The resulting work is a trailblazing slice of post-punk genius, with a couple of Wire's poppier moments, *I Am The Fly* and *Outdoor Miner*, leaping joyously to the fore.

Rarest 1978 Harvest **£40**
Latest 2018 Pinkflag **£18**

POST-PUNK REVIVALISM

The post post-punk bands kicking up an angular storm today

Although we refer to post-punk as an era rather than a movement, there is a new generation of bands who are attracted to post-punk's core tenets of creative experimentalism and an anti-rock stance. Here's a quartet of albums to check out:

Goat Girl Goat Girl
Rough Trade £16
DIY champions Goat Girl are the current poster-girls of the South London post-punk scene. The self-titled debut album is a dynamically ramshackle lo-fi affair with frisky lead vocals accompanied by country-tinged, bluesy guitar. The band consist of Clottie Cream (vocals), LED (guitar), Naima Jelly (bass) and Rosy Bones (drums).

Relatives In Descent
Protomartyr
Domino £18
Relatives In Descent is the fourth album from Detroit post-rock group Protomartyr. With frontman Joe Casey's vocal delivery reminiscent of a young Nick Cave, it is a dark, angry, uneasy album that paints a bleak picture of Trump's America. The band's early recordings were released on the Urinal Cake label.

Of A Nature Or Degree DUDS
Castle Face £18
The post-punk spirit of the Fire Engines and Josef K lives on in the angular, all-caps shape of Manchester's DUDS. Signed to the influential Californian indie label Castle Face Records, the debut album is a tight, succinct and pleasingly precise affair.

Come Play The Trees
Snapped Ankles
The Leaf Label £20
The first great thing you need to know about Snapped Ankles is that they perform live dressed as trees. After that, everything else seems irrelevant.

7 CUT
THE SLITS (1979)

The Slits were part of punk's inner coterie, mates with the Pistols and The Clash, but that didn't mean they wanted to sound like them. Drawn naturally to reggae-inflected rhythms, the band teamed up with dub producer Dennis Bovell to create the compelling and utterly distinctive *Cut*. Avant-garde then, it's still ahead of its time.

Rarest 1979 Island **£45**
Latest 2016 Island **£40 (purple)**

6 FEAR OF MUSIC
TALKING HEADS (1979)

Bursting with big ideas and fresh directions, the Brian Eno co-produced third album is a post-punk classic. From the African rhythms of opener *I Zimbra* to the trippy puzzlement of closer *Drugs*, the band's horizons are broadened and the possibilities endless. Those days touring Europe supporting the Ramones must've seemed a long time ago.

Rarest 1979 Sire, with free 7" **£30**
Latest 2013 Sire **£18**

4 MARQUEE MOON
TELEVISION (1977)

A pioneering post-punk masterpiece, Television's debut album couldn't have been further removed from New York's 1-2-3-4 punk scene of the day. Central to the piece was the intricate guitar interplay between Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd, particularly on the monumental 9.58 title track. Its sway over future generations of alt-rock bands is beyond measure.

Rarest 1977 Elektra **£40**
Latest 2015 Elektra **£20**

2 METAL BOX
PIL (1979)

With its challenging cocktail of Can-inspired krautrock, heavy dub basslines and experimental chaos, PIL's second album stretched post-punk's boundaries into unforgiving and previously unexplored sonic territory. John Lydon later claimed the album was largely improvised on the fly, because all the money for studio production had been spent on the metal canister that housed the record.

Rarest 1979 Virgin, 3x 12" in metal tin **£90**
Latest 2016 Virgin, Deluxe edition **£165**

5 COLOSSAL YOUTH
YOUNG MARBLE GIANTS (1980)

Young Marble Giants' spare, simplistic sound was the antithesis of punk's amplified aggression, and the Cardiff trio's one and only album is a truly distinctive work of haunting, magical genius. It remains one of post-punk's true masterpieces. Kurt Cobain was a fan and labelled it one of the five most influential records he had ever heard.

Rarest 1980 Rough Trade **£50**
Latest 2007 Domino **£20**

3 ENTERTAINMENT!
GANG OF FOUR (1979)

Adhering strictly to a manifesto of 'no corny lyrics, no obvious melodies and no change of key', Gang Of Four were the quintessential UK post-punk band. Fiercely anti-rock, the angular punk-funk on debut album *Entertainment!* was a calculated rejection of what had gone before. It remains the perfect post-punk artefact.

Rarest 1979 EMI **£20**
Latest 2014 Parlophone **£18**

1 UNKNOWN PLEASURES
JOY DIVISION (1979)

Joy Division were inspired to form after seeing the Sex Pistols, but the band's sound quickly evolved away from their punk roots. *Unknown Pleasures*, their astonishing debut, is post-punk's superlative moment, with maverick producer Martin Hannett creating the perfect sonic landscape for Ian Curtis' elegiac songs. Peter Saville's iconic duotone sleeve rounds off the job nicely. ●

Rarest 1979 Factory, blood-red vinyl **£90**
Latest 2015 Factory **£17**

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Classic Album

PULP

DIFFERENT CLASS

While their Britpop peers looked to laddism, The Beatles and The Kinks, in 1995 Pulp emerged with an album that was strident, stylish and contemporary – and eclipsed all those around them. **Neil Crossley** dives in...

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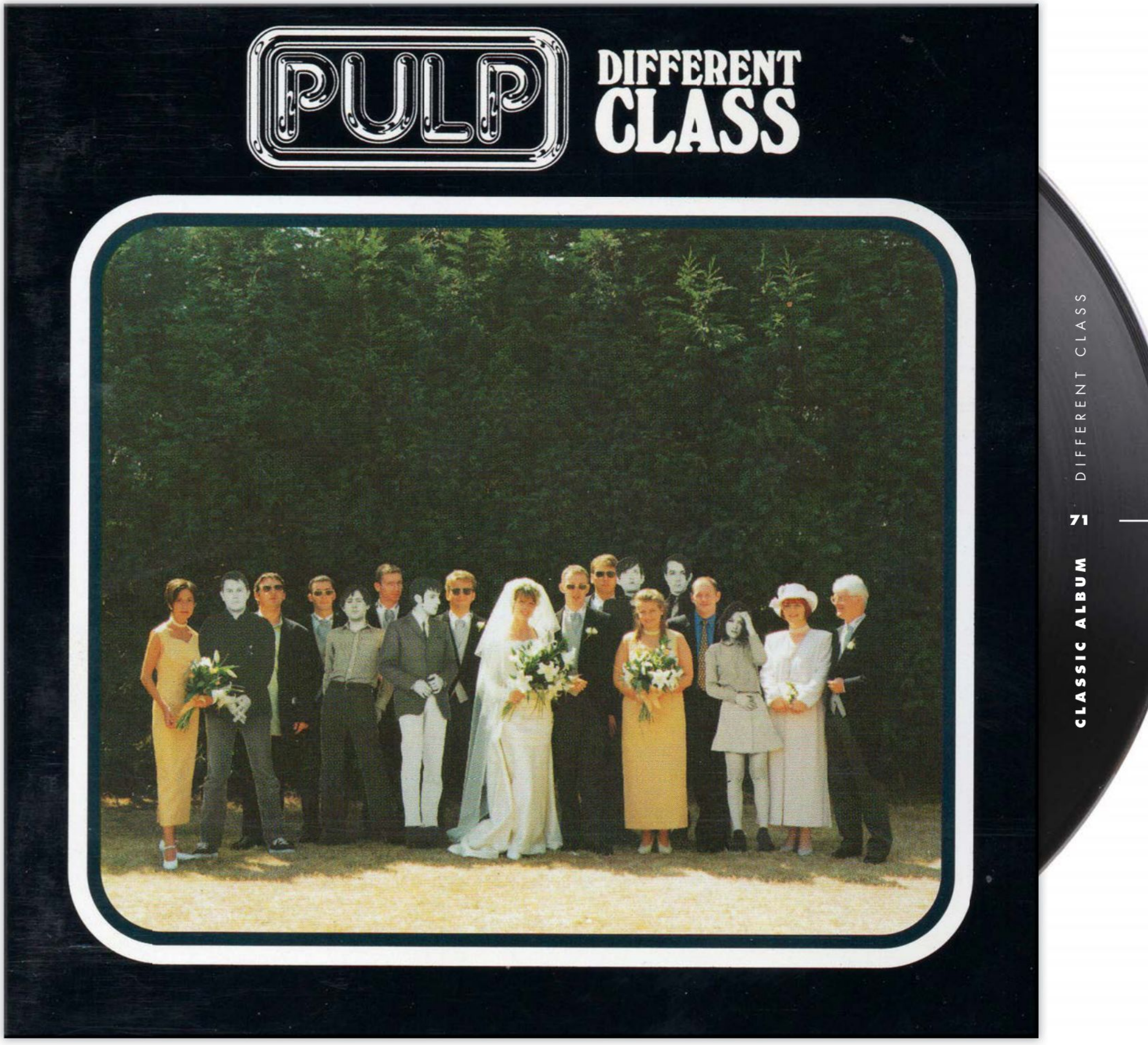

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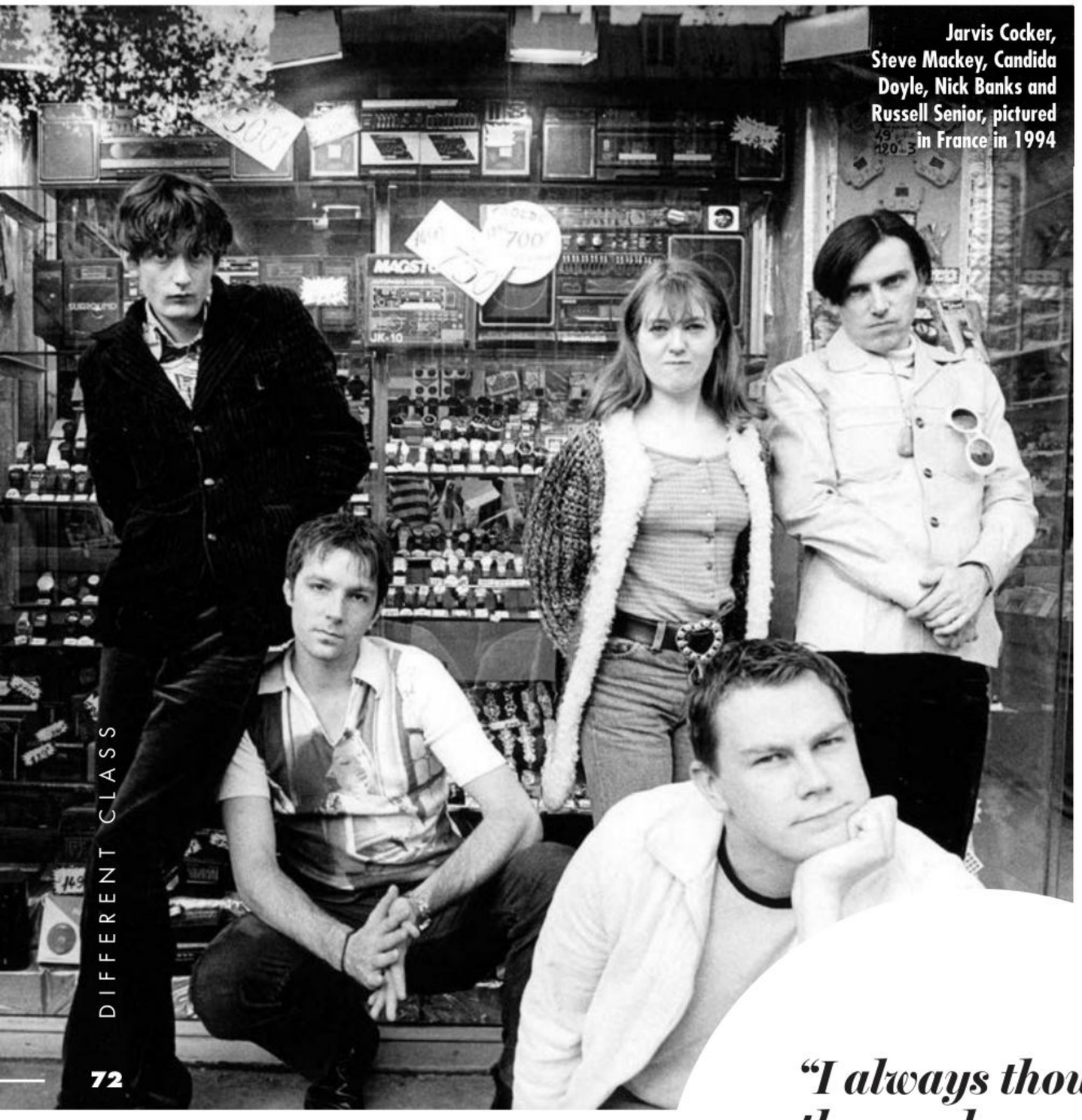


Jarvis Cocker, Steve Mackey, Candida Doyle, Nick Banks and Russell Senior, pictured in France in 1994

As retail outlets go, the shop once known as Record & Tape Exchange in Notting Hill has a rich legacy. It was the store where The Clash's Mick Jones could often be spotted; where cash-strapped music journalists would brazenly sell mint promo copies of albums before they'd even been released; and where, in 1994, a skinny Yorkshireman called Jarvis Branson Cocker walked up to the counter with a stack of albums to sell.

Armed with his credit from the sale, Cocker headed straight for the shop's second-hand instrument department, where he bought a Casio MT-500 keyboard. Within an hour, he had written the basic structure of a song that would become the anthem of an era for his band Pulp.

"I went back to my flat and wrote the chord sequence for *Common People*, which isn't such a great achievement because it's only got three chords," he told journalist Nick Hasted in *Uncut* in 2010. "I thought it might come in handy for our next rehearsal." Cocker played his new composition to Pulp bassist Steve Mackey, who laughed when he heard it, adding that it sounded like Emerson, Lake & Palmer's *Fanfare For The Common Man*. This sparked something in Cocker. "I always thought the word 'common' was an interesting thing. It was a real insult in Sheffield to call someone 'common'. That set off memories of this girl that I met at college. She was from a well-to-do background, and there was me explaining that that would never work. Once I got that narrative in my head, it was very easy to write, lyrically." Other band members were as unimpressed as Mackey when Cocker played his new idea. "It sounded like cod-Depeche Mode," recalled violinist and guitarist Russell Senior. But keys player Candida Doyle spotted a classic. "I just thought it was great, straight away. It must have been the simplicity of it. You could just tell it was a really powerful song then."

Common People – Cocker's memoir about a wealthy art student who wants to 'slum it' – would catapult Pulp into the pop mainstream and spark an intense burst of songwriting that would result in their fifth album, *Different Class*. In an era when Britpop bands obsessed over the past, *Different Class* shone out as unique, contemporary, stylish and smart.

The album was like a docudrama of 90s Britain – kitchen-sink pop that offered hilarious and heartbreaking accounts of ordinary working-class life – set against an instrumental backdrop that spanned Bowie, Serge Gainsbourg and Stereolab. *Different Class* was Pulp's crowning creative achievement. Over two decades on from its release, its songs, themes and sounds resonate as strongly as ever.

THE LONG GAME

If any band should be commended for sticking it out against all odds, it is Pulp. For 17 years, they ploughed on in relative obscurity, with over 30 members passing through their ranks. It was 1978 when the 15-year-old Jarvis Cocker and his friend Stephen Dalton formed Arabicus Pulp while at The City School in Sheffield. Musically, their style was eclectic, described by one

"I always thought the word common was interesting. It was a real insult in Sheffield to call someone common"

JARVIS COCKER

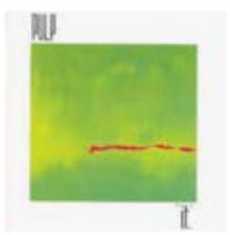
Inside Stepney's Night Club in the video for *Common People*

Guitar's The Star

"A big hit's what I went in there to create," said producer Chris Thomas of *Common People*. "I wasn't really looking for any particular sound at this point – more getting the performance. It's like you start painting, you know? You start filling up a few spaces.

"Right at the end, Jarvis said: 'I want to put a rhythm guitar on'. I said: 'What? There's millions of guitars here'. He went: 'No, I want to put an acoustic on'. And it brought the whole track together. It was just a brilliant idea. That acoustic guitar just welded all these disparate elements together."

Pulp's 1983 debut, *It*, released as a mini album in a limited run of 2,000 copies



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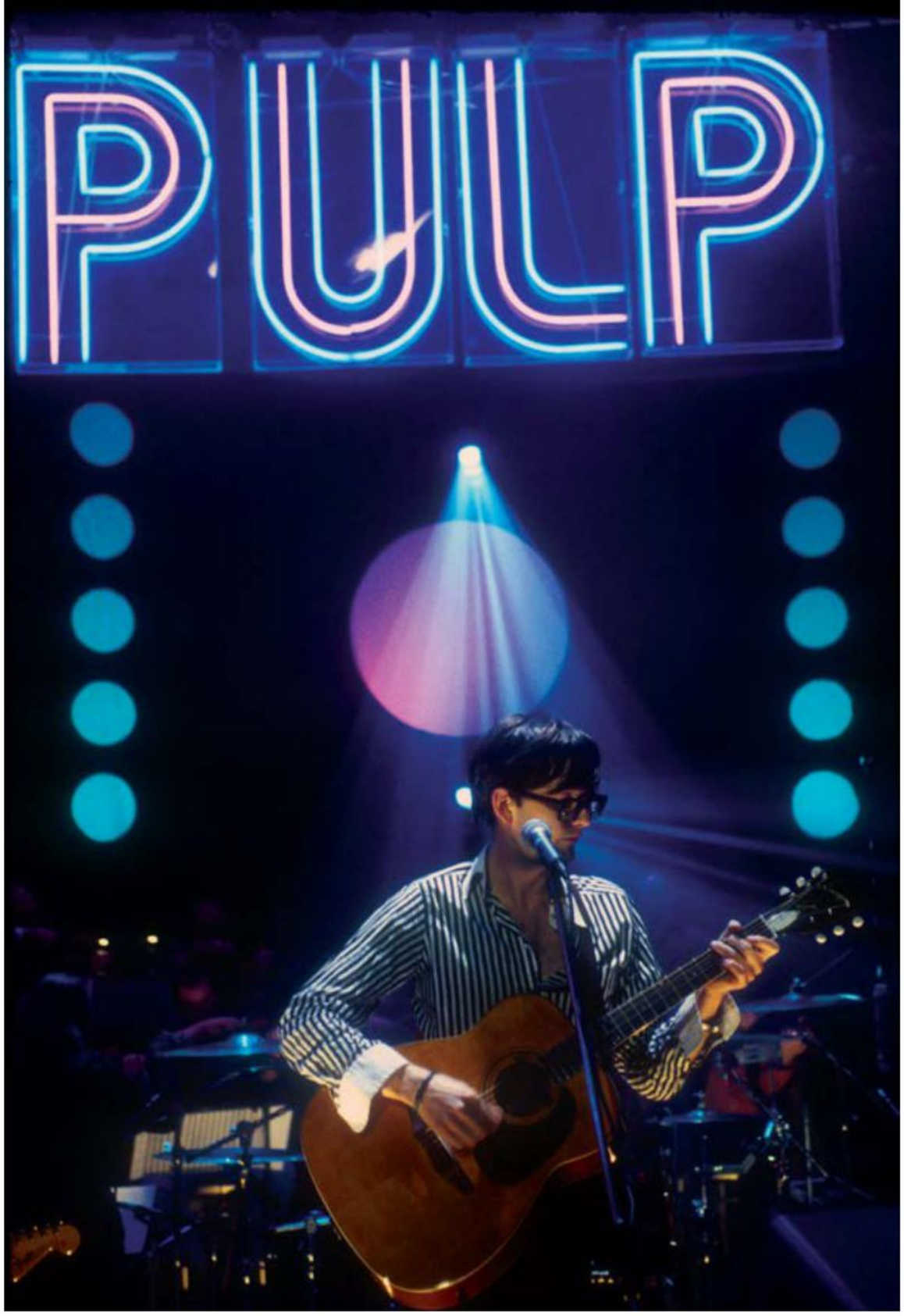

Rex

journalist as "a cross between ABBA and The Fall", and by another, less charitably, "as if they listen to the John Peel Show every night in an endless quest for influences". Fittingly, it was Peel who granted them their first radio session in 1981, after they sent him their demo tape. By then, they were called simply Pulp, and were in the same electronic post-punk ballpark as fellow Sheffield bands The Human League and The Comsat Angels. Recorded in November 1981, their Peel Session could have been the start of great things. But it led nowhere. By 1982, Cocker's entire band had left for university.

Performing on *Later... With Jools Holland* in November 1995

LUSH SOUND

Undaunted, Jarvis recruited a new line-up, with his sister Saskia on backing vocals, and pursued a lush folk-based sound. In late 1982, they recorded their debut album *It*, released the following year on Red Rhino Records. Cocker then met a musician who would become his collaborator: Russell Senior (violin, guitar, vocals). Together with keyboard player Candida Doyle, they pursued a new experimental direction. Pulp signed to Fire Records and recorded their second LP, *Freaks*. But by the end of 1986, all the members except Cocker and Senior had left, again. A year later, they recruited new drummer Nick Banks. But in 1988, after failing to gain a following, Cocker folded the band and left Sheffield to study film at Central St Martins College in London.

No sooner had Cocker dissolved Pulp than things actually started to happen. By now, he had met Steve Mackey, a fellow film student who had also moved to London. Mackey introduced Cocker to acid house and raves. Cocker showed

1987's sophomore effort, *Freaks*, was subtitled *Ten Stories About Power, Claustrophobia, Suffocation And Holding Hands*

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The songs

Core personnel

Jarvis Cocker Vocals, guitar, keyboards, synths
Russell Senior Guitar, violin
Candida Doyle Keyboards, synths
Steve Mackey Bass guitar
Mark Webber Guitar, keyboards, synths
Nick Banks Drums

Additional personnel

Anne Dudley Orchestral arrangement and conducting (tracks 4, 7, 9)
Gavyn Wright Orchestra leader
Andy Strange Orchestra recording assistance

Main production credits

Townhouse Studios
Producer Chris Thomas
Engineer David 'Chipper' Nicholas
Recorded 1994 to 1995
Released 30 October 1995

1 *MIS-SHAPES*

Revenge can be sweet for a foppish pop star with a serious axe to grind. Here, Cocker sets his sights on the brawling bruisers from his native Sheffield. When the *Different Class* tour rolled into that city on 22 October 1995, he delivered the message personally to the audience at the packed City Hall. "I lived 25 years of my life in Sheffield," he informed them, "and if I walked past any of those pubs on a Saturday night... I had to run because, you know the guys, white shirts, 'taches, curly perm, etcetera. The fashions have moved on, but the mentality remains the same, so don't be fooled. This is for all the mis-shapes in the audience." It's a strident opening salvo for the album, a manifesto for the geeks and freaks who can't go into town for fear that "you could end up with a smack in the mouth, just for standing out".

2 *PENCIL SKIRT*

Lust appears to be the driving lyrical theme of this track, whose quirky 60s lounge strains owe much to the likes of Serge Gainsbourg and Jacques Dutronc, from Cocker's whispered delivery to the echo-swamped pizzicato stabs of the strings.

"This is a song about doing things that you know are wrong but doing them anyway, because you get some kind of something out of it," Cocker told the crowd at Reading Festival in 1994, when the band first played the song live.

3 *COMMON PEOPLE*

Common People is the crowning glory of the album, the anthem of its era, which reflected the class divide – and whose core message resonates just as strongly over two decades on. Producer Chris Thomas recalls the biggest challenge was capturing the excitement of the song. "We spent maybe nine days on it," he recalled to *Uncut* magazine in 2010. "It was quite hard work. I was aware that there were some tempo changes in it, so I tried to go for a rough average. And that was insane. Jarvis didn't have time to sing the verses because it was too fast, and at the end, it completely dragged. So we got them to play it the way they would normally, and found out that it moves from about 90bpm, right up to 160. It starts galloping. And that acceleration is absolutely intrinsic to the excitement."

4 *I SPY*

An orchestral arrangement by Anne Dudley intros this dark, paranoid vignette, which is one of Cocker's finest songwriting achievements. There are no witty, hapless sexual fumblings here – this is the brooding, sneering voyeuristic underbelly of Cocker, with loathsome, sniping intent writ large.

Different Class won the 1996 Mercury Music Prize; the band donated their prize money to the War Child charity

Getty

Mackey the merits of Scott Walker and Serge Gainsbourg before resurrecting the band and recruiting Mackey as their new bassist. Their disparate influences would forge a whole new signature sound.

In 1989, Fire Records offered the band a decent budget to record their third album, *Separations*. When they released a single from the album called *My Legendary Girlfriend* in 1991, *NME* nominated it as their Single Of The Week. This was the turning point for Pulp. In 1992, they left Fire Records for Gift, and began releasing a series of singles that reinforced the success of *My Legendary Girlfriend*. The one that really started to attract attention was *Babies*.

This witty, hook-laden account of teenage hormonal turmoil led to a contract with Island Records. The song would appear on their first major-label album, *His 'N' Hers*, released in spring 1994. The album was an unexpected success, reaching No. 9 in the UK Album Chart and resulting in a Mercury Music Prize nomination. It also produced *Do You Remember The First Time?*, the first Pulp single to enter the Top 40 in the UK Singles Chart.

TV PERSONALITY

Pulp's ascent was fuelled by a wholly unexpected factor: Jarvis Cocker's growing success as a TV celebrity. As the band took off, his natural wit made him a popular guest on panel shows such as *Pop Quiz*. "I think everyone thought that Pulp would be like Denim… some 70s retro outfit who were really entertaining, quite kitsch, but would probably never ever sell a record," recalled BBC Radio 6 Music DJ Steve Lamacq in the BBC Three documentary *The Story Of Common People*. "But the one thing they had was Jarvis Cocker, who set them apart from everyone else."

With a Top 10 album, Pulp's priority was creating a follow-up. They had one song ready to go: Jarvis' Casio-penned composition *Common People*, the first song written for *Different Class*. The challenge was capturing its potential on record. "I realised we'd written something that had pretensions to being anthemic," said Cocker. "A class anthem." The singer's aim was to find a producer for the next album

Cocker's aim for the next album was to find a producer "who would give us a big sound, but not make us sound like twats"

"who would give us a big sound, but not make us sound like twats". They settled on Chris Thomas, whose credits included Paul McCartney, Roxy Music and, perhaps most intriguingly for Pulp, the Sex Pistols.

The recording of *Different Class* began in late 1994 at Townhouse Studios in Shepherd's Bush. The band were given two weeks to create *Common People* and crammed all 48 recording tracks with an array of instruments. "We used crappy keyboards and Chris did his best to make them sound as good as he could," said bassist Steve Mackey. "We were just very focused on what we could do with what we'd got."

Pulp's third album, *Separations*, was recorded in 1989 but not released until 1992

Write What You Know

Jarvis Cocker is a firm believer in the power and authenticity of autobiographical songwriting. "I would subscribe to Leonard Cohen's view: 'Art is just the ash left if your life is burning well'," he told *The Guardian* in October 2011. "Life is the important bit and detail is key – only a true eyewitness would notice apparently insignificant minutiae. When you put such details into songs, they bestow authenticity. For various reasons, my songs have always been based on narrative. Sometimes, I'd love to be able to get away with being allusive and vague, but any time I've tried, it's been a disaster."

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SOUND OF THE SUMMER

Common People was released on 22 May 1995 and hit No. 2 in the UK Singles Chart. It was an instant classic, the sound of the summer, a rousing, breakneck *tour de force* on which Cocker addressed the class war head on: the sobering inequity of those who "dance and drink and screw/ Because there's nothing else to do".

"That song released him," recalls Thomas. "Suddenly, while *Common People* was in the charts, Jarvis blitzed eight songs in 48 hours for *Different Class*. Every one was a winner." Cocker plundered his life for rich inspiration. Schoolday memories were revived through the glitz of *Disco 2000*; *Sorted For E's And Wizz* chronicled the downside of rave culture; while *I Spy* was a dark, paranoid, voyeuristic vignette.

As the band continued work on the album through the summer of 1995, an event occurred that would catapult them into superstar status and set the stage for the release of *Different Class*. When guitarist John Squire of The Stone Roses broke his collarbone while mountain biking, his band pulled out of the headline slot on Glastonbury Festival's Pyramid Stage. Pulp were asked if they could do it and jumped at the chance – Cocker and the band turning in a show so commanding it became a benchmark for what defines a winning performance on the Pyramid Stage.

"I couldn't tell how good the concert was until right at the end when we were playing *Common People*," Candida Doyle

The band had been in existence for 16 years by the time of their fourth album, 1994's *His 'N' Hers*

Pulp headlined the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury 1995, as last-minute replacements for The Stone Roses

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The songs *continued*

"I can't help it, I was dragged up. My favourite parks are car parks, grass is something you smoke, birds are something you shag. Take your *Year In Provence* and shove it up your ass."

Musically, it harks back to 60s soundtracks, drawing on sweeping thriller theme tunes and the scores of Spaghetti Westerns. Shut your eyes in the verses and the vocal melody has more than a passing nod to ABBA's *The Day Before You Came*. Nick Banks' drumming and Steve Mackey's bass drive this 4/4 track forward, with Mark Webber's deft guitar adding rhythmic power.

5 *DISCO 2000*

"The only bit that isn't true is the woodchip wallpaper," said Jarvis Cocker of the lyrics to this glitzy, evocative account of schooldays infatuation. The subject of the song was Deborah Bone, Cocker's childhood friend who went on to be awarded an MBE for her pioneering work in mental health, but who sadly died in 2015. The opening riff of the song – which reached No. 7 in the UK Singles Chart – was influenced by the intro of Italian singer Umberto Tozzi's 1979 hit, *Gloria*. Due to its millennium theme, Pulp removed the song's synchronisation licence, restricting it from being used for TV and radio throughout 1999 and 2000.

6 *LIVE BED SHOW*

While class is a predominant theme of the album, at least half the material features the love-and-lust preoccupations of the band's previous album, *His 'N' Hers*. Such is the case with *Live Bed Show*, a track that imagines the melancholic emptiness of a bed that no longer sees sexual activity. It's both seedy and emotive, with Cocker's slightly shaky take on a Scott Walker baritone lending real poignancy to the track, as he unveils another vignette of ordinary life. 60s Euro-lounge influences pervade throughout.

7 *SOMETHING CHANGED*

The glorious potential of chance encounters is championed here, in a track showcasing Pulp's talent for impeccable pop structures. From the sparsely strummed open chords and Jarvis' intimate delivery of the opening lines, there's a warm spaciousness to the production as he declares: "I wrote this song two hours before we met/ I didn't know your name or what you looked like yet". In 1995, Cocker revealed to *Melody Maker* that the song had been written 12 years earlier and originally sung by his sister, Saskia. "I worked out that it must have been written quite near to me meeting this girl. It's just wondering, really. If I hadn't gone out and met this particular person in this particular nightclub, and formed a relationship with her, how different would my life have been? It's not really about fate, it's more about the randomness of things. Which I like."

8 *SORTED FOR E'S & WIZZ*

Released as a double A-side with *Mis-Shapes* in 1995, this was Pulp's second successive No. 2. In a bid to get the song banned, the *Daily Mirror* claimed – via the headline 'Ban This Sick Stunt' – that it is a pro-drugs song, an accusation promptly refuted by Cocker: "I don't think anyone who listens to *Sorted*… would come away thinking it had a pro-drugs message. If they did, I'd say they'd misinterpreted it."

The songs *continued*

In a 1996 interview with Q magazine, he said the song was inspired by taking ecstasy at raves and the subsequent downside, after he was split up from friends at one event. "Suddenly, all the people who'd been going 'nice one' and 'empathy', when you're trying to get a lift home, they're all, 'No mate, sorry mate, no chance'. The 'common people' goes out the window, then."

9 *F.E.E.L.I.N.G.C.A.L.L.E.D.L.O.V.E*

Against Steve Mackey's pounding, offbeat bass, Nick Banks' staggered drums and Candida Doyle's ethereal digital cadences, Cocker's hushed, droll voice enters at 1:18, to describe the interior of a bedroom: "If I close my eyes, I can visualise everything in it/ Right down to the broken handle on the third drawer down of the dressing table." It's a wry yet menacing mood. At 2:50, it picks up, kicking into straight 4/4 rhythm, before breaking down again to the staggered syncopation. "And as I touch your shoulder tonight," intones Cocker, "this room has become the centre of the entire universe."

10 *UNDERWEAR*

Pulp's impeccable pop sensibilities come to the fore yet again with this charming, wonderfully realised track, which, impressively, hurtles straight into the chorus within 20 seconds of starting. According to bassist Steve Mackey, after years in the wilderness, Pulp seized on pop with all their might. Cocker's voice shifts effortlessly between baritone and falsetto as the song's central narrative of suburban heartbreak and lust unfurls.

11 *MONDAY MORNING*

Bristol's Anson Rooms was the venue for the live debut of this track, a shaky rendition according to one account, but one that had a galvanising impact on the audience. The gig, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 1, also marked the debut for Candida Doyle's new Ensoniq ASR-10 keyboard, a significant step up from her previous setup. *Monday Morning* is punctuated by Pulp's trademark stops-and-starts arrangement, and moves from staggered syncopation in the verses to straightahead 4/4 in the chorus. Once again, the track has a strong autobiographical tone. "If I have learnt anything about songwriting," Cocker told *The Guardian* in October 2011, "it is that in order to ring true, a song must be rooted in your own personal experience."

12 *BAR ITALIA*

Inspired by the real-life Bar Italia at 22 Frith Street in Soho, this final song on the album recounts the slow, frazzled comedown following a night out clubbing. In 1995, *Vox* magazine interviewed the band during the recording of *Different Class* and concluded the song was "...about the mixed delights of heading out into the dawn chorus in that ungodly hour before the milkman whistles his merry tune, nursing the after-effects of a good night out on the E or whatever in search of a reviving cappuccino".

The song remained a band and fan favourite and stayed in the live set on and off right up to their successful reunion in the late 2000s.

All In The Name

The inspiration for the album title came to Jarvis Cocker at Smashing, a club night that ran during the early 1990s in Eve's Club on Regent Street, London. One of Cocker's friends liked to use the phrase 'different class' to describe something that was in a class of its own. Cocker liked the double meaning, with its allusions to the British social-class system, which was a predominant theme on the album. This idea was reflected by a message on the back of the record that reads: "We don't want no trouble, we just want the right to be different. That's all."

told writer Nick Hasted in *Uncut* in 2010. "And they put the lights on the audience. You could see for miles, the lights and people dancing and singing… The next day… everything just felt touched by gold."

For many who saw it, it was a landmark moment. As Dorian Lynskey wrote in *The Guardian*, Pulp's performance on the Pyramid Stage represented "the sublime moment when lifelong outsiders realise they are suddenly right at the very centre of things".

GREATER HEIGHTS

In August 1995, two months before the release of *Different Class*, Pulp released the album's second single, the double A-sided *Mis-Shapes* and *Sorted For E's And Wizz*, which became their second No. 2 single. Then, on 30 October 1995, *Different Class* was released, to widespread critical acclaim. The album entered the UK Albums Chart at No. 1, going on to win the 1996 Mercury Music Prize. In 1996, the album was released in the US, where it received equally rave reviews. "A brilliant, eccentric, irresistible pop album," wrote David Fricke in *Rolling Stone*. As Stephen Thomas Erlewine of *AllMusic* put it: "Pulp fashioned a distinctive, stylish sound that made camp into something grand and glamorous, that retained a palpable sense of gritty reality."

In the UK, Pulp were hailed as one of the torchbearers of Britpop, a term Cocker justifiably hated. But many writers who reviewed the album were keen to point out that Pulp left all the other bands standing.

"Arguments about Blur versus Oasis are irrelevant," concluded Bob Stanley in his review of the album in *Mojo*. "Pulp are in a different class." ●

This Is Hardcore* was released three years after *Different Class

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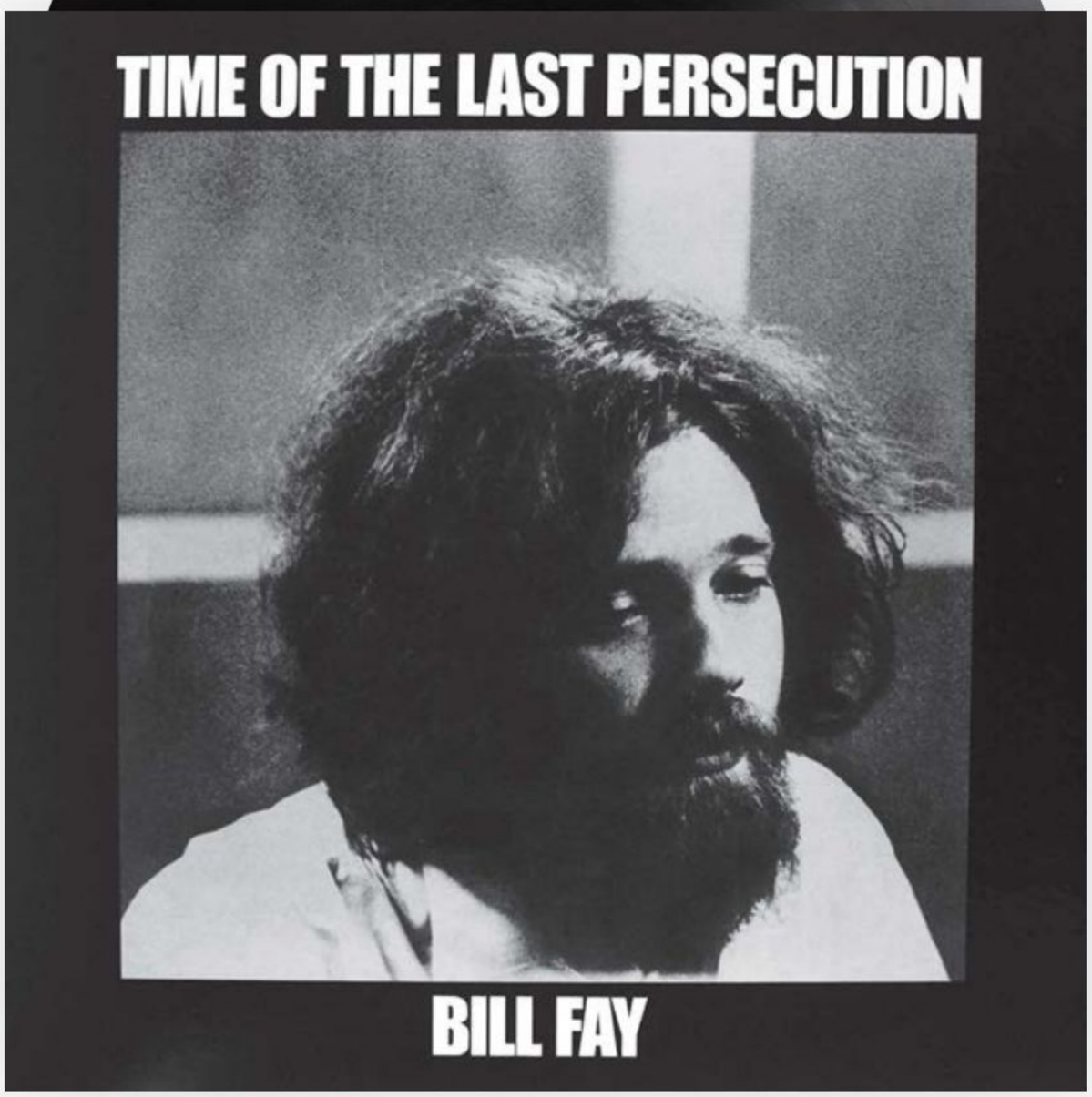

BILL FAY
TIME OF THE LAST PERSECUTION
BLACK VINYL

Bill Fay's introspective, biblically themed 1971 classic was all-but ignored on release – but its reputation and collectability have risen ever since

WAX FACTS
Bill Fay
Time Of The Last Persecution
Year **1971**
Format **Black vinyl**
Label **Deram**

£1,000

Bill Fay joined Deram in the late 60s, and released two albums: in 1970 and 1971, respectively. *Time Of The Last Persecution* was the second of these but did not sell well, resulting in the label dropping the singer-songwriter/pianist. Over the years that followed, the album would become part of psych-folk lore and go on to attain almost mythical status.

Eventually, *Time…* would be held in similar regard to Nick Drake's majestic 1971 album, *Bryter Layter,* and Vashti Bunyan's stunning debut, *Just Another Diamond Day*. Yet until it was reissued in 1998, only a handful of people were aware of Fay's music, garnering him cult status among a select crowd of (mostly) musos.

Musically, it's a very light album, built around delicate melodic intricacies. For the narrative, Fay would draw inspiration from the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation. Coming off the back of the hippie movement, the album – warning of judgement and despair – was a stark contrast to the messages of peace and love that had become commonplace.

Due to poor sales, this has become a highly collectable record. Original, mint-condition pressings have sold for as much as £1,000, so finding a copy will be neither easy nor cheap, but will ultimately be rewarding – it's sure to only grow in value. *Time Of The Last Persecution* would, like many unsung folk albums from the time, go on to become revered long after the release. It's served as an inspiration to a number of artists, notably Wilco and regular Sonic Youth collaborator Jim O'Rourke, and still sounds ahead of its time nearly 50 years later. ***Glen Bushell***

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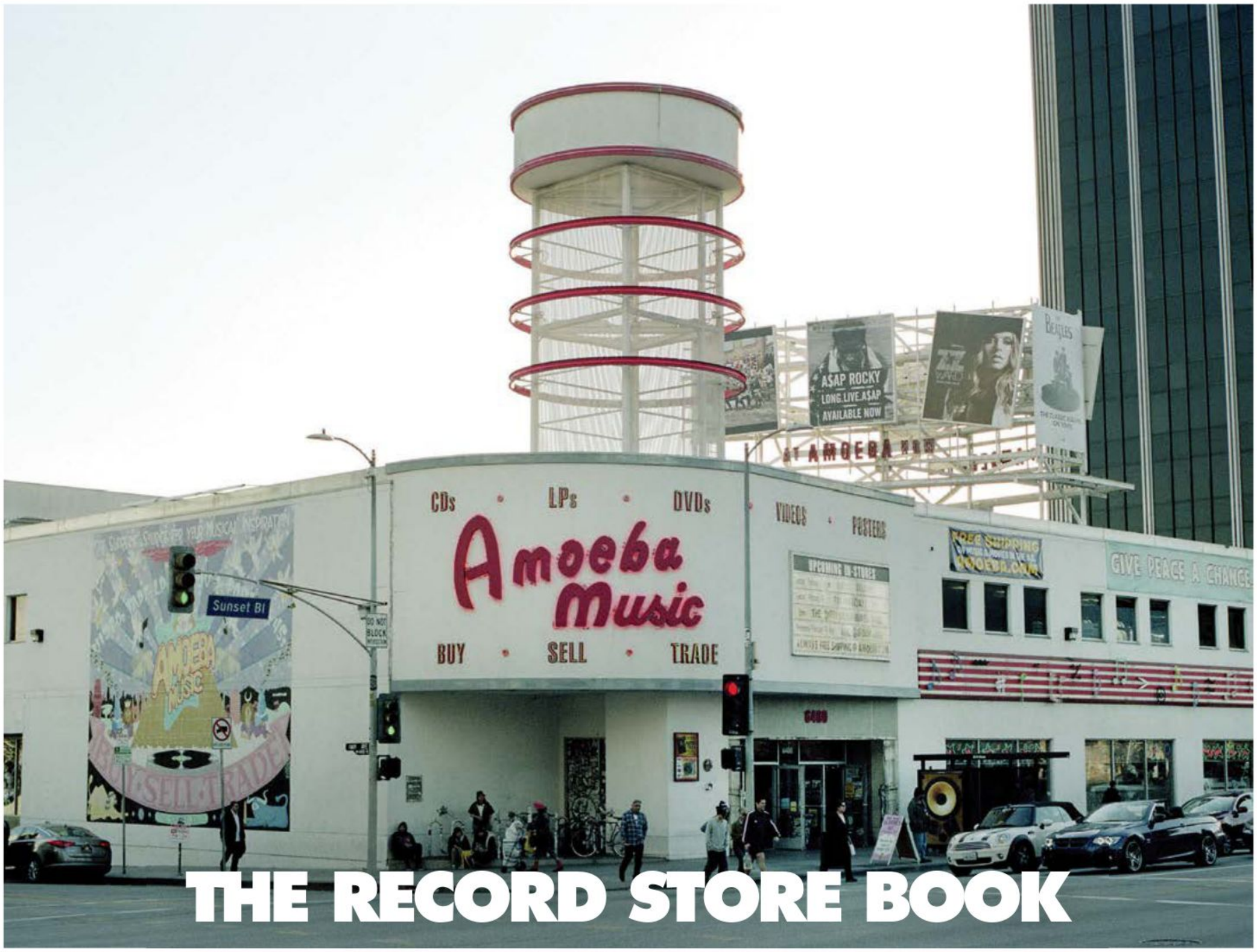

AMOEBA MUSIC

In an extract from their book on America's independent record stores, Rebecca Villaneda and Mike Spitz visit a California institution

Easily the most well-known record store in California, Amoeba Music was started by David Prinz and Marc Weinstein in 1990. Contrary to what has been reported, the two met at Streetlight Records in San Francisco in 1988. Dave had just sold a small chain of video-rental stores around San Francisco called Captain Video, and Marc was the manager there. They both had a love and appreciation for collecting vinyl and record stores.

Marc's relationship with music began with an AM radio by his pillow, aged about 10 years old. His personal record collection consists of about 6,000 LPs, and he got his first record store job at 18. "Vinyl is still the best possible representation a musical artist has ever had to share their work – curated the way they want and with the best sound," Marc says. "They represent the best possible 'hard copy' of an artist's work. Knowing that LPs are often very limited printings, they hold all kinds of value – not least of which is an ephemeral artifact of a particular scene or era. LPs are still the best format ever created, and a whole generation of young collectors are discovering that today as the 'mechanical' era slips away."

About the book: The Record Store Book – Fifty Legendary And Iconic Places To Discover New And Used Vinyl by Rebecca Villaneda, with photography by Mike Spitz, is published by Rare Bird Books. Find more info at www.rarebirdbooks.com

The first Amoeba store opened in Berkeley, California, followed by the San Francisco location on Haight Street in a former bowling alley – steps away from Golden Gate Park – in 1997; then came the two-storey Sunset Boulevard store in LA that opened in November 2001. Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue, known as Record Row, was once the mecca for record collectors in the Bay Area. Indie music stores inundated the area, quenching ▶

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Marc Weinstein co-founded Amoeba Music with David Prinz in 1990

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the thirst of any type of music fan. Leopold's, Universal, Rather Ripped, Discount, Rough Trade, Odyssey, Mint Platter, Pellucidar, The Musical Offering and Rasputin were all in the area, as well as chain stores Tower and Virgin.

Following the success of the two northern California stores, the LA store was inevitable. There have been offers to open locations in Chicago, Seattle, New York and London, but Marc and Dave can't imagine doing all that travelling, because they're so hands-on with their stores. Marc is responsible for the look and feel of the stores, and acts as the "frontman" of the business, while Dave is more of the "behind the scenes" and numbers guy, who deals with the bankers, lawyers and real-estate brokers… but they both had a love for music.

AMOEBA SUBDIVIDES

They're currently working on building an indie record store online, to offer an alternative to the corporate giants that continue to dominate digital distribution.

Amoeba has outlasted the larger chain stores, and according to Marc, it's because stores such as Tower and Virgin "buckled under their own weight".

"Tower grew too big and too fast, but always had the spirit of a 'real' record store, despite all the industry ads and hype," he elaborates. "Virgin always felt more like a bank to me – super corporate and having little of the necessary feel of a place truly passionate about music. Once these stores and others like them started selling every inch of wall and bin space to the highest bidders – the 'major' labels – the party was pretty much over [because] their 'soul' was lost."

To Marc, Amoeba was always a superior model to any of those big chain stores, especially because it also bought and sold second-hand merchandise.

"It gives us a much deeper catalogue than they ever had, and often at a much better price," he says. "As a business, that extra margin that used product brings us makes it possible for us to pay our staff better; for example, bringing a lot of record store 'all stars' our way over the years. Collections from all over the country and the world also bring us inventory no one else could have: titles and issues that were otherwise not even sold in the western US in the first place."

That allows Amoeba to maintain its business model, which is to remain – as much

"WE HAVE A UNIQUE CULTURE… A REFLECTION OF THE BROADER COMMUNITIES WE'RE IN"

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as it can – for as many different types of music collectors as possible.

"We curate our sections as if they were each a small indie store of their own," Marc says. "We also go out of our way to make stuff as easy to find as possible. Our staff are all music geeks in different genres – rarely is there a question we cannot answer between us. Each store has always been run quite independently, very much reflecting the collective personality of the community that they are in."

Between all three stores, there are 350 employees, who manage to sell about two million LPs, CDs, 45s and tapes each year. "Being as all-encompassing as our stores are, we have a unique culture and vibe, in that we have become such a reflection of the broader communities we're in," Marc explains.

BOUTIQUE BUSINESS

In Los Angeles, for example, Amoeba has become a rare place where any music lover can see and feel a "distillation of their great city that amply displays how very diverse and deep the music scene is", he says. "Great record stores will continue to survive and thrive for many years to come – more as boutique businesses in communities that really care about the subject.

"As much as there is no equivalent to art museums in the world of music, we represent a place where you can go anytime to celebrate your love for music." ●

Amoeba Music has stores in Berkeley, San Francisco and Hollywood. Recent reports suggest the LA store is set to relocate, but Amoeba remains "committed to LA". For more information, see www.amoeba.com

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TALKING SHOP

RESIDENT MUSIC
BRIGHTON

In a city not short of record shops, Resident Music's owners have made theirs a home from home for customers. **Wesley Doyle** settles in…

It's an unseasonably warm Saturday morning in mid April and there's something of a carnival atmosphere to be found around Kensington Gardens in the North Laine area of Brighton. A queue of people line the street, chattering excitedly. Music – live and played by a DJ – is all around, while nearby cafes have opened early and set about serving the 300 or so extra customers they've found on their doorstep. To the uninitiated, it may seem as if they've stumbled upon an urban music festival. But for those in the know, this vibrant celebration of all things musical is 2018's Record Store Day, Resident Music-style.

As exciting as this all sounds – and this scenario was repeated in record shops nationwide – it won't have featured in any mainstream coverage of this year's event. Much of the attention focused on the limited nature of the RSD releases and the likelihood of them ending up on eBay or Discogs. For the owners of Resident, who pride themselves on making the day special for their customers, it's a bit disappointing. "It's really important for people to remember it's not just about the product," says Natasha Youngs, Resident co-founder along with Derry Watkins. "The original ethos of making your local record shop part of the community and getting people through the door seems to have disappeared, as the press just want to pick up on the novelty of the releases. I think that's a real shame, as there are some amazing local stories that come out of participating shops, but they don't end up getting covered."

Community is an important concept to Youngs and Watkins and it crops up several times in conversation. They met in 2000 when they were both working for Virgin Our Price; their ideas about what made a good record shop were shaped, for better or for worse, by their experiences – at first on the high street, and then later, at head office. "We took a lot from the earlier days of Our Price," says Watkins. "Especially in terms of how the shops would reflect what was going on around them. A lot of indie shops at the time seemed to have stopped caring about their customers and had basically become boys' clubs. A good Our Price was almost like an indie when it was allowed to localise itself."

Youngs' experience of late-90s record shopping in independent stores bears this out. "They could be quite intimidating environments," she says. "I never found anywhere I felt welcome, and it didn't need to be like that."

When the pair found themselves "involved in a particularly depressing project", they decided to strike out on their own. "We were putting a lot of energy into something we didn't believe in," says Watkins, "and we thought, 'why don't we just do this ourselves?'."

SETTING UP HOME

That was in 2004: a time when music retail was in flux, particularly on the high street, and Youngs and Watkins experienced it all first-hand.

"I can't even remember how many people literally laughed in our face," says Youngs. "Our friends thought we were insane to do it, as everything you read was how the record shop was no more ▶

> "WE WERE PUTTING A LOT OF ENERGY INTO SOMETHING WE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN. WE THOUGHT, 'WHY DON'T WE JUST DO THIS OURSELVES?'"
>
> **DERRY WATKINS**

Pictures: Adam Bronkhorst

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and downloads were the future. Even Our Price were swapping out music for phones at the time."

Despite incredulity from their soon-to-be former employers ("I always said that there would still be independent record shops long after the chains had gone," says Watkins, "I was definitely laughed at for that one"), they started to put things in place in preparation for launching their own shop. "Getting finance was really difficult," says Youngs. "We had to sell a lot of our stuff, including our flat! Derry took redundancy in one of the many restructurings at Virgin Our Price and we pooled as much as we could before we finally found a sympathetic business manager who got what we were doing."

With a business plan and finance in place, the pair set about finding a shop in their chosen location. "We always felt that you should open a store where you live," says Watkins. "The best record shops reflect the town or city they're in, and it makes a massive difference if you feel connected to a place and to what's going on there."

VINYL STRONGHOLD

However, where they live happens to be Brighton, a city renowned for its concentration of record shops (Watkins estimates there were around 20 chain and indie shops in the city in 2004, when they launched Resident). Vinyl sales were at an all-time low (less than 5% of total music sales) and CDs were at a never-to-be-reached-again peak. With this in mind, they started by stocking only CDs and set about finding their place in an already crowded market.

"We felt that most of the other shops were quite niche," says Watkins. "And we wanted to appeal to people like us who weren't being catered for elsewhere. It wasn't about a particular type of music; it was more about people who were into music but felt intimidated by other places."

While the duo were happy to be the go-to place in Brighton for the CD enthusiast, even Resident wasn't immune from the return of vinyl.

"Vinyl was really well catered for in Brighton, but more and more people started asking for it and, eventually, we started stocking a few bits in a box on the counter," says Youngs, "which became another box and then another and another. At the time, the shop was half the size it is now, and we were still stocking a lot of CDs while trying to squish the vinyl in. People were crawling around on the floor trying to buy records!"

With Record Store Day increasing demand further, and with the small shop at breaking point in 2015, they took the plunge and leased the adjoining property, taking down the dividing wall and creating the Resident that people know today. It proved to be a good business move, as vinyl now accounts for 70% of their over-the-counter sales and 95% of their online trade. Despite its near-extinction, Watkins was always sanguine about vinyl's survival.

"Vinyl disappearing was led by developments in hardware," he says, "and

> "VINYL DISAPPEARING WAS LED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN HARDWARE… I CAN'T SEE IT EVER DYING NOW. PEOPLE JUST HOLD MORE AFFECTION FOR VINYL THAN ANY OTHER FORMAT"
>
> **DERRY WATKINS**

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THE BIG THREE

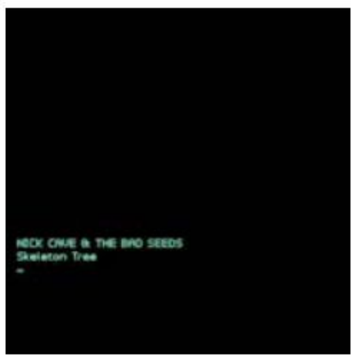
THREE ALBUMS RESIDENT'S CUSTOMERS LOVE

BON IVER
FOR EMMA, FOREVER AGO
2007

"This showed us that if you really get behind a record early on people will respond to it," says Watkins. "We were at one of his first UK shows (at Brighton's Great Escape Festival in 2008), everyone was already singing the songs and the record hadn't even come out in the UK yet. And people responded to it more than anything ever, and it became a defining record for the shop."

THE WAR ON DRUGS
SLAVE AMBIENT
2011

"The War On Drugs were a band that changed things for us with regards to the perception of the shop," says Youngs. "We really pushed their first album and some customers were surprised that we'd gone down that route, but we sold a lot of copies. It was *Slave Ambient* that people really picked up on, though. I loved how it made the shop feel when we played it, and it was amazing live, too."



NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS
SKELETON TREE
2016

"*Abattoir Blues* came out when we opened in 2004," says Watkins, "and he's come in over the years… In 2013, we'd made Matthew E White's *Big Inner* our Album Of The Year when *Push The Sky Away* had just come out; Cave was in the shop. He said: 'Who the fuck is Matthew E White?'. He was fine though, and bought a copy!"

after a while, major labels didn't want it anymore, so the pressings just got worse and worse. It seemed as if every album I bought was more like a flexidisc than an album! In the end, I gave up and thought, 'I can't buy these'. It's great that it's back as a viable format, and I can't see it ever dying now. People just hold more affection for vinyl than any other format."

RACK 'N' ROLL

Resident's regular in-store performances are another string to their bow. Again, in a city where live music is thriving, the pair had to find their own way of doing things. "Brighton's got such a huge music scene, so doing in-stores can be quite difficult, as you don't want to be treading on local promoters' toes," says Youngs. "We try to be really careful about it and make sure that we do something different."

Despite having big names such as The xx, Mumford & Sons and Laura Marling play the shop, the pair maintain the best in-stores are the ones where the artist embraces the shop as a performance space. "I remember when Jeremy Warmsley played in the shop," says Watkins. "He turned up early, went over to [retro bric-a-brac shop] Snoopers Paradise and bought a couple of old instruments and used them in his set."

The Dresden Dolls also made an impression. "They were playing later that night at [local venue] The Concorde, so for the in-store, they played totally acoustically and did only cover versions, so their audience wouldn't hear anything they were going to play later."

For Youngs, return visits from The Maccabees, Field Music and Micah P ▶

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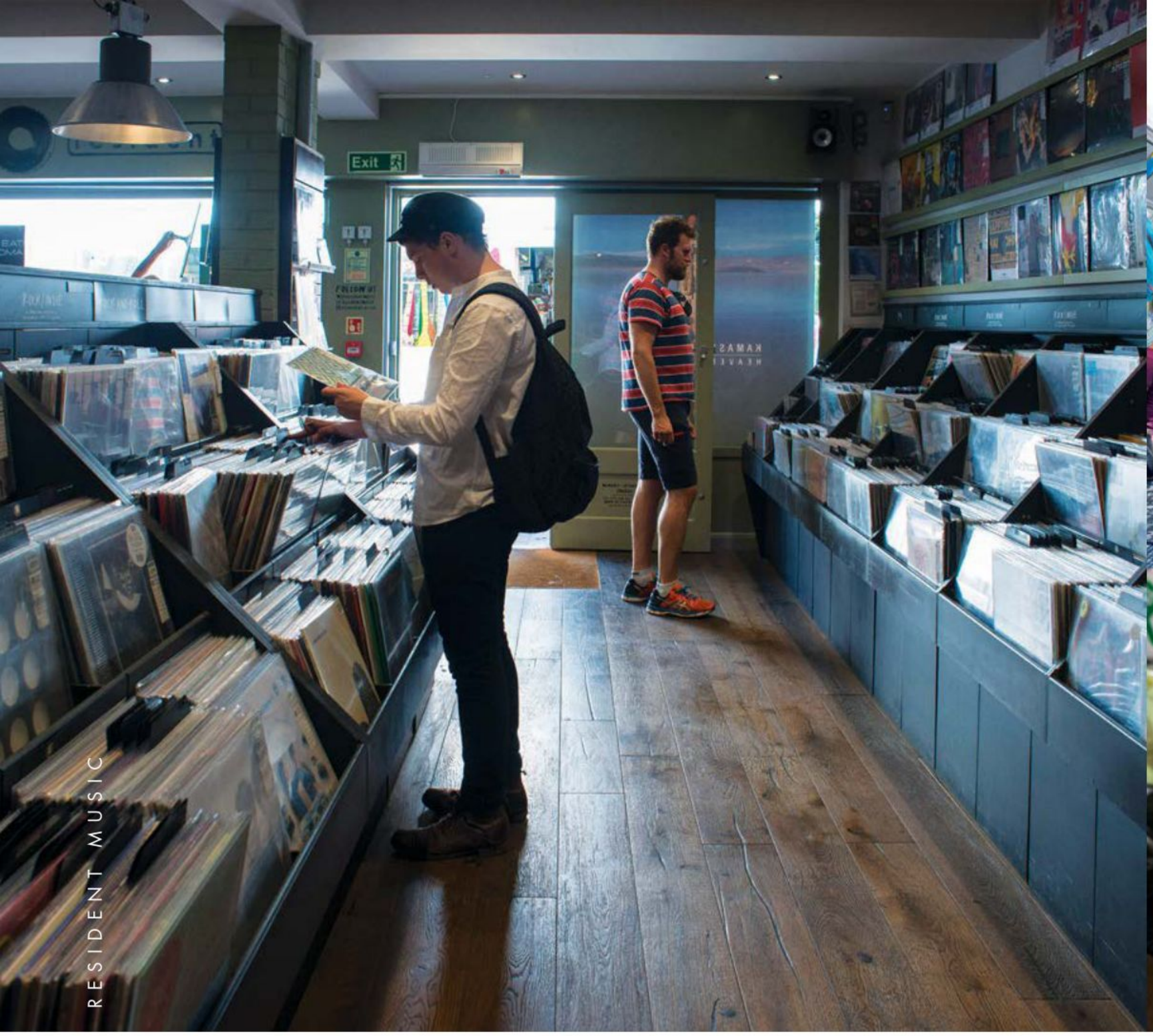

Hinson show what can be achieved when you build a relationship with an act.

"I also loved last year's This Is The Kit in-store, they embraced the customers and talked to everyone in a really lovely way. Or The Duke Spirit; Liela performed in the middle of the shop and got everyone to stand around her. Things like that are unique events for the customer, which is ultimately what a record shop should be providing if they're getting it right."

And if the dedication of their customers is anything to go by, Resident are definitely doing that. Back to Record Store Day, and their queue for Saturday morning starts at 5:30am the day before – prior to opening, they find 300 people queuing outside.

"We have a hardcore of half-a-dozen people who compete with each other to be the first in the queue," says Youngs. "But most people are a bit more sensible now and realise that they don't need to queue overnight to get what they want. We order a *lot* of stock, so we recommend people spread it out over the day. Don't stress… come later in the afternoon, enjoy some music and make a day of it."

As the oft-repeated saying goes, every day should be Record Store Day – a phrase Youngs and Watkins are more aware of than most people, since not only are they business partners, they're also a married couple. "It can be difficult for it not to take over your life," says Watkins, "particularly when you're working in a business that involves something you're both passionate about. It can be a struggle to switch off at times, but ultimately, it makes the business stronger."

The lines between work and home life can blur in other ways, too, particularly as Youngs is responsible for the Resident aesthetic. "I'm a bit of clean freak and I found record shops generally really dirty and scummy. Sorry! I'm not a big fan of the old idea of cratedigging and getting really dusty and dirty with grit under your nails. It's not really me!"

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The big wicker chair where customers could sit while listening to music may be gone, but there's still a definite homely vibe to the shop, with its clean lines and dark wooden floors giving the impression of being in someone's living room.

"We were saying the other day that our house is starting to look like the shop," laughs Youngs. "The light fittings are ones we really wanted at home but didn't have the space, so they ended up in the shop. We have to be really careful!"

With the Resident brand so strong, and the current shop clearly a proven success, surely the next step for the duo is to open a store in a new location?

"It's been talked about over the years," Watkins concludes. "But we've always resisted it. Not just because it's so expensive to open a record shop, but because we wouldn't be living in the area. To provide the same service somewhere else would be really difficult, we wouldn't know what we were doing in the way that we do in Brighton. We see our customers out all the time, everywhere we go. We're part of the community here." ●

> "I LOVED LAST YEAR'S THIS IS THE KIT IN-STORE, THEY EMBRACED THE CUSTOMERS AND TALKED TO EVERYONE IN A REALLY LOVELY WAY. OR THE DUKE SPIRIT; LIELA PERFORMED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SHOP"
>
> **NATASHA YOUNGS**

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The Trip

AMSTERDAM

Mark Elliott's record-shopping stamina is put to the sternest of tests in Amsterdam – undoubtedly one of the world's greatest and most varied cratedigging destinations

You know that feeling that kicks in about 25 minutes after Christmas lunch – the self-satisfied glow and the sense you have over-indulged just a little too much? Swiftly followed, of course, by a billowing sense of exhaustion and the faintest trace of nausea? Well, a weekend of record shopping in Amsterdam feels rather like that. Ignoring the sins of food, flesh and intoxication on offer here in all their many forms, this is certainly a cratedigger's illicit den of temptation – with more than 20 shops, all offering something a little different. Throw in the city's bustling flea markets and you've got a unique cocktail for overindulgence!

Not content with the world's biggest record event just up the road – Utrecht's Mega jamborees in April and November – plus a decent number of fairs held in Amsterdam itself throughout the year, this is perhaps the perfect choice for a weekend of the passion we share. Everywhere is easy to get around on foot (it is, of course, famously flat) and navigation is relatively straightforward, too, with roads following a simple-to-understand grid fanning out evenly from the Dutch capital's centre.

In truth, the challenge you'll have is how to cover the ground in a couple of days. I managed 19 stores out of 21 in about 36 hours of uninterrupted shopping (well, I did eat and sleep – briefly) and failed to do the city's flea markets any significant justice.

You'll find a bit of everything. Being on the continent, the 1970s 45 picture sleeves are much-prized by pop collectors; the soul and dance is abundant and the prices for rock are keen – but it's fair to say most of these dealers know their stuff. That said, I came across one of my best-ever bargains here, but I'll let the narrative lead you to that joyful moment in due course. On departing most of the cities I visit on these trips, I leave satisfied the stock has been pillaged and I've unearthed much of what's on offer. Not so, Amsterdam. This is a destination that one could imagine coming to visit at least twice a year, if stamina and funds would stand up to it. After wearily loading my haul into the back of my car (thank god I decided to drive here!) I had to concede defeat – I pride myself on covering a huge amount of cratedigging in decent time. But Amsterdam had beaten me in the sweetest possible way…

I managed 19 stores out of 21 in about 36 hours of uninterrupted shopping (well, I did eat and sleep – briefly)

Illustration Ben Talon

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1 RECORD PALACE
33a Weteringschans
Opening hours
11am to 6pm Monday to Saturday; noon to 5pm Sunday

2 RECORD MANIA
30 Ferdinand Bolstraat
recordmania.nl
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday; noon to 6pm Sunday

3 CONCERTO
52-60 Utrechtsestraat
concerto.amsterdam
Opening hours
10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday (to 7pm Thursday); noon to 6pm Sunday

4 AMSTEL ANTIQUES RECORDS
110 Amstel
amstelantiquesrecords.com
Opening hours
Noon to 5.30pm, closed Weds

5 RECORDFRIEND ELPEES
64 Sint Antoniesbreestraat
recordfriendamsterdam.nl
Opening hours
11am to 6pm
Tuesday to Sunday

6 CITY RECORDS
100A Geldersekade
cityrecordsamsterdam.com
Opening hours
11am to 6pm
Tuesday to Saturday

7 VINTAGE VOUDOU
26 Oudekerksplein
vintagevoudou.com
Opening hours
3pm to 7pm Wednesday to Friday; 1pm to 6pm Saturday

8 REDLIGHT RECORDS
Oudekerksplein 22
Opening hours
9.30am to 9pm
Monday to Friday

9 BLUE NOTE
12 Gravenstraat
Opening hours
11am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday; noon to 5pm Sunday

10 BACK BEAT RECORDS
19 Egelantiersstraat
backbeat.nl
Opening hours
11am to 6pm
Monday to Saturday

11 DISTORTION RECORDS
244 Westerstraat
Opening hours
11am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday (to 9pm Thursday); 10am to 6pm Saturday

12 MICHIEL VINYL
76 Marnixstraat
facebook.com/MichielVinyl
Opening hours
Noon to 6pm
Tuesday to Saturday

13 EARDRUM BUZZ
9 Haarlemmerplein
eardrumbuzz.nl
Opening hours
Noon to 6pm
Tuesday to Saturday

14 FLESCH RECORDS
116 Noordekerk Straat
Opening hours
11am to 3pm Monday; 1pm to 5pm Wednesday to Friday; 10am to 6pm Saturday

15 RUSH HOUR
116 Spuistraat
rushhour.nl
Opening hours
1pm to 7pm Monday; 11am to 7pm
Tuesday to Saturday (to 9pm Thursday); 1pm to 6pm Sunday

16 WAXWELL RECORDS
8 Gasthuismolensteeg
waxwell.com
Opening hours
Noon to 7pm
Monday to Saturday; noon to 6pm Sunday

17 RECORDS & BOOKS
371 Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal
recordsandbooks.nl
Opening hours
Noon to 6pm
Monday to Sunday

18 SECOND LIFE
366 Prinsengracht
secondlifemusic.nl
Opening hours
1pm to 6pm
Monday to Sunday

19 HOMESICK RECORDS
24 Tweede Rozendwarsstraat
facebook.com/homesickrecordsamsterdam
Opening hours
Noon to 6pm
Monday to Sunday

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1 RECORD PALACE

This well-regarded generalist has been trading since 1988, and Jan van Dorsten has an army of customers from around the world. While I'm flicking through two floors of well-stocked racks of vinyl, I hear him in conversation with an American and a chap from Japan – both had made a special trip over just to go record shopping. Jazz is what Record Palace is most famous for, but there's a good selection of classic material from the 60s, 70s and 80s, plus large import sections from Japan and even India. The domestic Nederbeat – 60s beat-pop – is another house speciality and is increasing in its collectibility, hence rising prices. I'm drawn to the huge soundtracks section…

2 RECORD MANIA

Slightly further out of the city centre than many of the other stores on this list, this attractive shop is one of those places you spend as much time just soaking in as you do going through the stock – a monument, if you like, to gentler times for the retail trade, when owners cared as much about what their business looked like as what prices they could charge. The stained-glass windows really add a sense of occasion and the records are pretty fine, too. There are lots of deals (three for €10), but not many singles. The tiny basement has a good mix of cheaper discs, including a lot of jazz and soul.

3 CONCERTO

When men of a certain age go misty-eyed about record shopping, they're likely imagining something like this Amsterdam institution (dating from 1955), that shows no signs of sinking anytime soon. It's the record shop you'll most likely see listed in a guide book and it deserves its place as, perhaps, the one music store you should visit above all others (as if!). It certainly has the best selection of new vinyl I find on my jaunt, with the second-hand stock picked expertly to offer up just the best of what is, in truth, a mountain of used discs for sale in the city. The 45s yield the Blondie gem *I'm Gonna Love You Too* (never issued as a single in the UK), while the LPs I buy include Eternal's *Always & Forever* (90s pop albums on original vinyl issue are getting ever more collectable), and *Tracks* by Liverpool Express. I could spend a whole day in here, as I barely glance at the large number of new imports.

4 AMSTEL ANTIQUES RECORDS

One of the most central sites on my list, this store looks unpromising at first glance – its basement brightly lit and featuring rows and rows of LPs and a handful of 45s by the door. What it lacks in atmosphere, though, it makes up for in breadth of stock and decent prices. There's a lot of blues and metal in the packed racks; you may well find a copy of The Nolans nestling up against some Nazareth, such is the relatively free-form filing system. I find Joe Jackson's *Mike's Murder* soundtrack, some Marc Almond 12"s and more.

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5 RECORDFRIEND ELPEES

Near the Central Station, this is another gem. Navigating the spiral staircase down into the basement yields a sight that gets any collector's heart beating a bit faster: the sale. The budget soundtracks are excellent value and I source still-sealed collections for *Down And Out In Beverly Hills* and *Blind Date* (Jennifer Warnes and Gary Morris). I'd been flirting for some time with Scissor Sisters' *Night Work* on vinyl, but had been put off by an omnipresent online retailer's pricing. Not so here. It sets me back about half of what I would have paid if impatience had overruled common sense.

6 CITY RECORDS

In perhaps the nicest location of all these shops, City Records isn't the biggest you'll find, but everything is clean, fairly priced and curated carefully. One of the things I enjoy when overseas is searching out a local band I haven't heard of and buying up some of their back catalogue. Post-punk rockers New Adventures peaked here in the early 1980s and I start picking them up across my time on this trip.

7 VINTAGE VOUDOU

Tucked away down a courtyard in the city's Red Light District, this store has been open since 2010 and is a temple to the exotic. Getting in is half the battle (note the buzzer on the courtyard gate you may need to ring), but it's worth persisting. With imports from around the world and from the past 50-odd years, this is much revered by the city's cooler DJs – although you'll obviously not find much Marillion here.

8 REDLIGHT RECORDS

This appropriately named shop next door to Voudou got started after the government encouraged businesses to take over premises employed previously for prostitution. A radio station came first and this room seemed a natural companion. Stock is small, but it's an interestingly curated collection; largely second-hand, but some new discs, too.

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Top five

1 SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO
The record shops in Amsterdam seem so community spirited, they've clubbed together to produce a map. It lists most – but not all – of the places I visit and was last updated in 2016, so keep an eye out for changes to things such as opening hours. The map is free and available in the stores listed and I also found a copy at the local Tourist Information Centre.

2 MARKET SQUARE HEROES
Flea markets are an Amsterdam institution. There are three of note – Waterlooplein is the best bet for vinyl, I am told. It operates daily, but not all the stalls are there every day. IJ-Hallen is usually held on the first weekend of the month and is vast; while Dapper is the one that you'll enjoy for its lively atmosphere, if not abundance of records.

3 MUSIC MAKES THE PEOPLE COME TOGETHER…
The live scene is in fantastic shape in this city. Paradiso draws the biggest names, Bimhuis is great for jazz and Het Concertgebouw is the one to pick for some real culture. www.iamsterdam.com and timeout.com/amsterdam are the best sites to check what's on.

4 YOUR CASH IS KING
Some shops only take cash and US visitors might find their non-chip cards aren't compatible with Dutch machines (I saw this a couple of times). I found ATMs a bit thin on the ground, too, so stock up before you go out.

5 KEEP YOUR EYES ON ME
What starts as a delightful scene can swiftly feel like an assault course… there are bicycles everywhere in Amsterdam and there's little attention paid to traffic protocols. It has a lawless charm, but do be careful!

9 BLUE NOTE

This cramped shop is packed with an even balance of CDs and vinyl, but there's a bit of everything, despite the marketing focus on soul, funk and jazz. The clue's in the name, of course: the jazz is pretty abundant, and I hear one knowledgeable punter putting the guy behind the counter through his paces. He seems happy enough – and leaves with quite a haul. I leave with less, but pick up a few discs, including a signed 12" of Jimmy 'Bo' Horne's 1980 dance hit *Is It In*. Is it just me (or the Amsterdam ambience), or is this the filthiest record title of all time?

10 BACK BEAT RECORDS

This is another jazz specialist, but plenty of other genres are covered, too. There are new records, but second-hand dominates. Arthur Conley opened the shop in 1988 and there's a strong tradition here of small gigs being held at the venue, which isn't for the faint-hearted if you have a fear of heights. Climbing an admittedly small ladder to access a crate or two is a first for me!

11 DISTORTION RECORDS

This long-established indie is a daunting explosion of boxes when I visit; shoulder-high piles of precarious discs need to be navigated, but just as I'm wondering if I can face it, my resolve kicks in. And thank god! Now, there are many who won't be able to imagine paying anything for a Nik Kershaw record, but his German-only 12" *James Cagney* is on Discogs for £86. And there's just one for sale! I stumble across a mint copy here for €2 and leave quickly, before the owner comes to his senses.

12 MICHIEL VINYL

By contrast, Michiel Vinyl is a fabulous blend of great records and top-rate shop design, with elegant crates packed with promising 7"s; not to mention the old gramophones and vintage furniture. The pop selection is especially strong. I find an interesting couple of crates of Jamaican reggae imports, but I'm afraid it's the pop singles that draw me in – from variant covers (Culture Club's *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me*) to the obscure (Italo-disco god Den Harrow's *A Taste Of Love*). I emerge with a haul so large I have to head back to the hotel to store it, before heading on…

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13 EARDRUM BUZZ

Record shops that sell coffee or vintage goods are becoming more commonplace, but a joint venture with a barber is a new one on me. Having lost most of my hair in my late 20s, barbers don't get a lot of business from me, but this basement shop with its lengthy racks offers an eclectic range, and prices are good, so it's a different story. I pick up an early 80s precursor to today's lavish multi-disc boxset reissue – a 1982 Dutch-only version of a multi-European territory Cliff Richard And The Shadows reissue of a 60s EP. What makes this interesting is *Holiday Carnival* is in a rare 12" format, with Discogs listing it for nearly $100. Mine costs me less than a tenth of that.

14 FLESCH RECORDS

With an emphasis on classical, Flesch Records is one of the most refined of the record shops you'll find in this city. The elegant store sells old turntables – and even needles – but is perhaps most famous for the baskets of fruit and vegetables you'll often see outside. Again, it's the impressive soundtracks section I'm drawn to; picking up a copy of the release for Fassbinder's provocative *Lili Marleen* and John Williams' fantastic score to *The Towering Inferno*. A lonely looking box of singles by the door offers up near-mint copies of ABBA and some early Elton in pristine Benelux picture sleeves. I don't even pass on a copy of De Electronica's *De Vogeltjesdans* – yes, the *Birdie Song* started life here in Holland, before going on to terrorise the wider world in its cover by The Tweets. It proves an odd bedfellow here, with all of that Beethoven…

The elegant store sells old turntables – and even needles – but is perhaps most famous for the baskets of fruit and vegetables you'll often see outside

15 RUSH HOUR

Building up to be a worldwide brand in dance music, the original store led to a label, and Rush Hour hasn't really looked back since its launch in 1997. Curating a mix of local and international talent, the brand's releases get prime promotion, but in truth, there's no better place to buy dance music – whatever the label – in this city.

The Trip

Getting there

Eurostar has just launched a direct train service to the city from London, but you'll need to change trains at Brussels on the return (until they sort out passport controls at Rotterdam and the Dutch capital). Flying is probably quicker and there are direct trains from Schiphol airport to the city centre. I took the ferry from Harwich and drove up from the Hook Of Holland, which took about 90 minutes and was very easy (although driving in the city centre isn't for the faint-hearted). You can walk anywhere in Amsterdam relatively easily and the trams are fun if you can work out the map. Given the amount of decent vinyl here, I'd say driving over is a necessity if you've got my sort of collecting habit!

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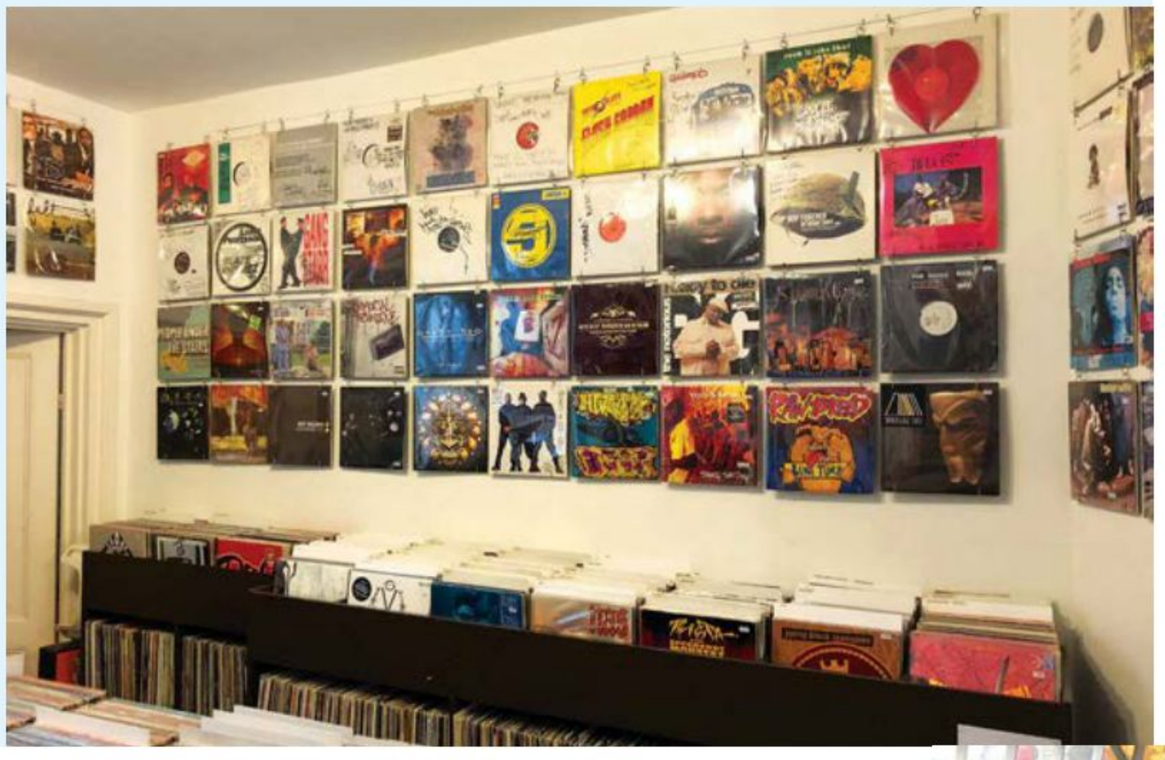
16 WAXWELL RECORDS

This multi-genre 2005 veteran has a strong reputation for just about everything – I find loads of great 1960s 45s and the jazz, funk and blues sections are top-notch. There's new stock, but the second-hand dominates: the bargain crates are very interesting, with a surprising amount of Toyah. Clearly, some collector had been having a clear-out!

This 2005 veteran has a strong reputation for just about everything – I find loads of great 1960s 45s



17 RECORDS & BOOKS

Doing exactly what it says on the tin, this small shop has a range of decent bargain records outside, but the ground floor is largely books, with the vinyl relegated to the basement. Peter Cetera's *Solitude Standing* for €1 seems about right, but a 1987 Coca-Cola local promotional LP featuring Cetera's contemporaries, such as Cock Robin and King, is a little pricier. That doesn't stop me buying it, though.

18 SECOND LIFE

This is the sort of store I adore – mountains of vinyl, where you'll battle through dusty piles to get at a stack rarely troubled by human contact. And that is precisely where you'll often find the interesting stuff – in this case, Generation X's 1980 12" issue of *Dancing With Myself*, a lot of Jennifer Rush (appreciating that might appeal to me more than you) and the double-groove 12" of The Shadows' *Theme From The Deer Hunter* and *Don't Cry For Me, Argentina*. Not especially rare, but interesting. What I haven't seen before is the LP picture disc for Cher's 1979 disco opus *Take Me Home* – a US issue for €15. I spend more than an hour here and would gladly stay longer, if exhaustion wasn't kicking in.

19 HOMESICK RECORDS

I actually own a few Dylan records – the soundtrack to his lame 1987 movie *Hearts On Fire* and a couple of his 60s classics. Homesick Records got the seal of approval when Dylan visited the store, and the range of his releases is certainly very impressive. I finally pick up Lady Gaga's *The Fame* and some 80s 12"s, including John Farnham and The SOS Band. At this point, I have to concede defeat. There were two shops I just couldn't make across the two days I had – Zwart Goud (89s Geldersekade; especially good for dance) and Black Gold (13 Korte Koningsstraat; funk, dance and hip-hop). I'm grateful for the short drive back to the port and the peace of an overnight ferry home… ●

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DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Mark O'Shaughnessy recalls a record-collecting trip to New Jersey with a roomful of secrets that still gives him the night terrors...

Around 1998 or 1999, New York City and New Jersey seemed particularly successful destinations for my digging partners and me; I can recall going to NYC and staying in the self-same YMCA in Midtown five times in the same year. It was on one such NYC/NJ trip that we went on a digging episode that still gives me cold sweats whenever I think about it. Talk about missed opportunities…

My digging buddy on this trip (world-renowned Latin/jazz/Tropicália expert Mark Wimmers – hi Mark…) and I had spent this particular day in and around Princeton in New Jersey, trawling for five hours in the bins at the long-established Princeton Record Exchange and a few other spots in the town. Princeton is a must-visit destination on any NJ expedition. However, on this particular dig, the 7"s were thin on the ground… and this was our last day in the city.

Out came Mark's closely guarded little black book of contacts. "I've got an idea," he announced. "Let's call Joe in Teaneck". While we were waiting for Joe to pick us up in his flatbed truck, Mark explained to me how Joe used to be a big cheese on the NYC/NJ 7" dealers' circuit in the 80s, but was now semi-retired – and he still had a lot of 45s in his basement. Bring it on!

We arrived at Joe's wooden bungalow, with a basement downstairs. Joe just wanted to get back to the ballgame on TV: he simply moved the fake tigerskin rug on the floor aside and pulled up the trap door. "You guys want cold drinks?" he asked nonchalantly. Boy did we, the day was burning hot, mid-June. Enormous jugs of ice-cold Kool-Aid were handed over by Joe's equally semi-mute wife and down we went, jugs and all.

You wouldn't believe the size of this space, it must have been 100 square metres. We had a technique of starting at opposite sides of the room and working towards one another, then crossing over to ensure the other hadn't missed any gold. This worked well, as Mark and I had different areas of knowledge.

Six solid hours went by and the numbers were pretty good. As I said, Joe was semi-retired and his interest was waning. I can distinctly recall unearthing two absolute 7" gems on that day: Bobby Reed's *The Time Is Right For Love,* Bell (demo) and Carl Hall's *What About You,* Columbia (issue), both highly prized Northern Soul bangers.

Mark was pulling out some lovely Latin 45s on Tico, Fania and Cotique – no major killers, but definitely some extremely saleable stock.

By about 9pm, we were flagging and my head was spinning. We'd been in this airless aircraft hanger since before 3pm and I reckon around 450 very solid 1970s soul/funk/Latin/jazz 45s had been pulled out – all $1 a pop.

We gathered our spoils, paid Joe in hard currency and made sure we hadn't left anything behind. I peered around a few darkening corners and suddenly spotted another doorway, one we hadn't previously spotted because Joe had piled up a year's supply of firewood in front of it. I shouted out: "What's in here, Joe?". "That's my 50s and 60s room," Joe yelled back. "Nobody's even been in there for around 15 years." This guy actually had a whole room dedicated to 50s and 60s 7"s! I managed to push the door back a couple of inches and somehow jammed my head into the small gap to get a look at what was in there (a bit like Jack Nicholson's famous 'Here's Johnny' scene in *The Shining*). Right before my eyes were literally thousands and thousands of 7" singles, all piled up horizontally, all out of their sleeves and stretching out as far as the eye could see, right into the gathering gloom. I guestimated that there were around 100,000 7"s in that room. God only knows what we would have found in there – judging by the 1970s area, it would've been a stupendous hit.

But it wasn't to be. Jack still had more baseball he wanted to watch and his wife was about ready to shout down for what must have been the 10th time. "Joe, are those English guys STILL here?" So – we had to go, and leave the room untouched, as painful as it was. We were flying out of JFK the next afternoon. Time to go back to the Midtown Y and pack up our finds to be shipped back to Blighty. I still wake up sweating and screaming about what was in that room… ●

I jammed my head into the small gap, a bit like Jack Nicholson's famous 'Here's Johnny' scene in The Shining. There were literally thousands of 7" singles

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Bath record shop Resolution Records and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

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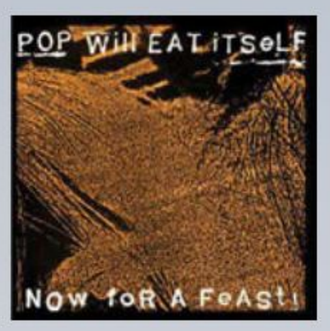
THE **BIG** REISSUE

Optic Nerve

Chris Parkin talks to Ian Allcock, whose Preston-based Optic Nerve Recordings is a reissue label with a love for and inside-out knowledge of 80s and 90s indie-pop…



Ian Allcock isn't new to releasing records. After running a small indie-rock label in the early 90s, he released happy-hardcore anthem *Life Is Like A Dance* on his Salamander imprint. Then, destroying any neat narrative about his musical background, he reissued the entire back catalogue of 70s prog-rock band The Enid on his Mantella label, before a final record-releasing act of the decade in 1997. Allcock put out a CD by The Vibrators' John Ellis, who coined a new name for Allcock's latest venture – Optic Nerve.

And that was it… for 15 years. But after his music import/export business collapsed, Allcock decided that it was time to build another disparate catalogue of releases, using the name Ellis had given him.

Most of Optic Nerve's releases since 2012 sit happily in the racks of post-punk-ish UK indie-pop, but as well as music by The Servants, The Monochrome Set and Girls At Our Best!, he's also reissued albums by industrial avant-garde Slovenians Laibach and grebo-rock Brummies Pop Will Eat Itself. "I know the 80s – from '78 up to the mid 90s – so that's what I'm going to do," he shrugs. His connection to this era means that every reissue is like an expression of his affection. Like the label's lavish five-LP House Of Love boxset.

"It nearly broke me," he laughs. "The big mistake I made was, when it was all done, it weighed over two kilos. So to ship it outside of the UK, that made it difficult to sell. It was a bit of a coup, but I won't be doing another boxset unless I have a lot of money in reserve!"

The experience of pressing albums gave Allcock pause for thought. "There was a massive price hike," he says. Competition was fierce, too. "Now everyone's putting out records. No one, though, was doing 7"s."

"THE BIG MISTAKE I MADE WAS IT WEIGHED OVER TWO KILOS. SO TO SHIP IT OUTSIDE OF THE UK, THAT MADE IT DIFFICULT TO SELL. I WON'T BE DOING ANOTHER BOXSET UNLESS I HAVE A LOT OF MONEY IN RESERVE"

Allcock is a lifetime devotee of the 45; they dominated his earliest record-buying days. So, following a little research, he started Optic Sevens – a subscription service offering 12 reissued 7" singles for £60. It's an idea that harks back to classic singles clubs by the likes of the Too Pure and Sub Pop labels, and by focusing in on the jangly, bittersweet C86-era of 1980s indie-pop, Optic Sevens subscribers will know exactly what to expect.

"I wanted to get 12 together, but there had to be demand," Allcock explains. "They had to fetch something on the second-hand market – there's no point in reissuing something that you can get on Discogs for 20 pence – and they all had to fit together musically. So off I went."

Limited to 500, each coloured single comes with a postcard, poster and badge – "Not for the marketing, just because I think that will be nice."

Allcock is flexible, too. He posts them in batches to reduce shipping costs and makes sure that a few of the singles turn up in record shops to buy individually. It's a project delivered with love.

"I'm not about being trendy," concludes Allcock, who has a second series planned. "I just think it's a lovely thing to do." ●

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LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Pixies

COME ON PILGRIM... IT'S SURFER ROSA DELUXE EDITION

4AD

In March 1987, Pixies entered a studio in Boston, Massachusetts to record a demo tape. The resulting 17 tracks ended up on a cassette known as *The Purple Tape*; the songs that featured would go on to reappear in various forms across their career, but an initial eight were trimmed and remixed by 4AD to become *Come On Pilgrim*. Songs sung in Spanish, religious references and a slow-fast, quiet-loud dynamic all featured heavily, forging a template and building a foundation for a group who, in many ways, would go on to be the ultimate alternative-rock group of the era.

Joey Santiago's guitar is wiry and minimal yet also frenetic and crunchy, David Lovering's drums are sparse yet heavy, and Black Francis' vocals ricochet between scorched screams and angelic coos, as Kim Deal's bass hammers away and her vocals add the perfect counterpoint to Francis'. For a band's opening statement, they came out almost fully formed; tracks such as *Ed Is Dead* capture those sustained guitar notes singing out against Deal's chugging bass and Francis' inimitable vocals and hyper-rhythmic acoustic guitar. Such songs are sonic statements that define what people love about the band – but by the time of their 1988 full-length debut *Surfer Rosa*, they'd taken that formula and amped it up to new and blisteringly ferocious levels.

Bone Machine is a steroid-injected horse bolting out of the starting gate, and it sets an explosive tone. Not only is the production so much crisper and tauter from the off, but the band feel tight and in-sync. Francis' and Deal's vocals meld into one another or dance and hop around; the guitars sit so high in the mix, it's as though Santiago is perched in your ear. Yet despite all the strong individualistic characteristics that burst through as everyone finds their place, every member feels in perfect service of the overall sound – on a record where space, punctuation and restraint are as fundamental as the blasts of noise. Aside from standout tracks *Where Is My Mind?*, *Gigantic* and *Broken Face*, 30 years on, the most rewarding element of *Surfer Rosa* is the vitality that oozes from this record. *Something Against You* explodes with a confidence, energy and spunk that can only come from a young band knowing they've hit on something special – and then hitting on it as hard as they can. Also included in the Deluxe Edition is *Live From The Fallout Shelter*, a previously unreleased radio session for WJUL, first aired in late 1986 that captures the band in incendiary form, featuring early airings of *Caribou*, *Broken Face*, *Vamos* and *The Holiday Song*.

Surfer Rosa is as challenging and odd as it is accessible: there aren't many records that can kick out a pop gem like *Gigantic* one minute and then fire out the screeching noise assault of *Vamos* the next. These two opening-statement records still remain as vital as they are vivacious. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

9/10

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LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The Band

MUSIC FROM BIG PINK 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

CAPITOL/UMG

Music critics are often guilty of bandying around hyperbolic epithets about albums – "classic", "landmark", "epochal" – you get the picture. But let's not understate the case for *Music From Big Pink* – this was a game-changer for rock 'n' roll. It's not strictly true that this astonishing collection came out of nowhere – The Band had already backed Dylan and rockabilly veteran Ronnie Hawkins – but the way they hit the ground running as finished-product songwriters in their own right was totally unexpected. This is an album that sounds simultaneously familiar and otherworldly – woodsy, organic and shot through with an acute understanding of *The Great American Songbook*. Robbie Robertson's guitar playing serves the songs rather than dominates them, and in Richard Manuel, The Band had one of the most soulful vocalists around. The quintet transform their *Basement Tapes* Dylan collaborations *I Shall Be Released* and *This Wheel's On Fire* and create their own standard with *The Weight*; while drummer Levon Helm shines vocally on the funky *We Can Talk,* and *Chest Fever* showcases mad-scientist organist Garth Hudson. The Super Deluxe boxset has a CD version with five outtakes, a Blu-ray 5.1 surround mix, plus a 2LP incarnation on black vinyl and a 7" of *The Weight*. A 180g 2LP pink-vinyl version is also available. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The Pretty Things

S.F. SORROW 50TH ANNIVERSARY

MADFISH

The Pretty Things were victims of release-date circumstances with their concept LP *S.F. Sorrow*. Sandwiched between the 'White Album' and *Beggars Banquet*, it hardly stood a chance. The quality of the songs on *S.F. Sorrow* certainly wasn't to blame – this is a Brit psych-rock masterpiece. Out of step with the back-to-basics approach of both The Beatles and the Stones, *S.F. Sorrow* still resonates with tripped-out hippy ideology. But there's a darker edge here, too. A storyline taking in birth, love, war and death sees the titular protagonist ultimately deciding to turn against the world and resign himself to a life of depressed solitude. Raga-rock opener *S.F. Sorrow Is Born* morphs into the swirling atmospherics of *Bracelets Of Fingers* and the punchy psychedelic romance of *She Says Good Morning*, while the mournful folk of *Private Sorrow* sees the album deftly change direction as our hero heads off to battle. The striking *Balloon Burning* is proto prog, and the band move into uncharted territory with the wonderfully eccentric *Baron Saturday*, a progressively more wigged-out *The Journey* and downright terrifying *I See You*. Despite the refutations, the punchy *Old Man Going* surely influenced Pete Townshend to toughen up The Who's sound. This 50th Anniversary boxset edition serves up the album in both mono and stereo incarnations, an intriguing David Gilmour-assisted Abbey Road live recreation from 1998, plus assorted singles. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

9/10

WorldMags.net

U2

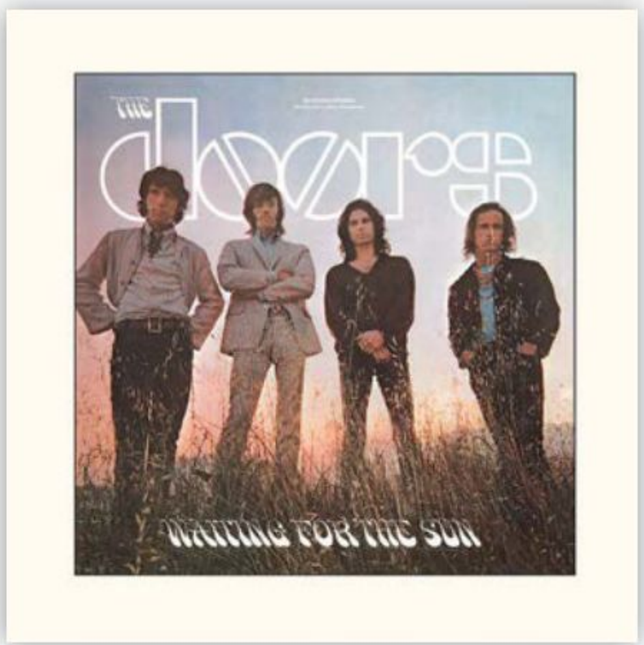
ACHTUNG BABY, ZOOROPA, THE BEST OF 1980-1990

ISLAND

U2's vinyl reissues reach the band's adventurous peak – a period when unease at new megastardom resulted in them becoming as experimental and visionary in real life as they were in Bono's head. Nearly 30 years on, *Achtung Baby* remains their finest hour. *One* is the peak of U2's stadium balladry, human as well as ambitious. Better still is the groove they suddenly discovered on much of the rest. That urge to dance dominates *Zooropa*, where U2 properly stopped caring about success. Bar the occasional and inevitable self-indulgence, it's lively and often surprisingly funny. Bonus points for both issuing it on double vinyl for the first time, and adding two remixes to round out Side Four: Paul Oakenfold's take on *Lemon* remains vivid. *The Best Of 1980-1990* is weakest, however, sagging near the end. Despite adding *One Tree Hill* for the first time here, it feels skimpy, omitting fine singles such as *Two Hearts Beat As One*. Crisply packaged, like the rest of the campaign, it's a welcome reminder of when U2 were hip as well as huge. *John Earls*

VERDICT

9/10



The Doors

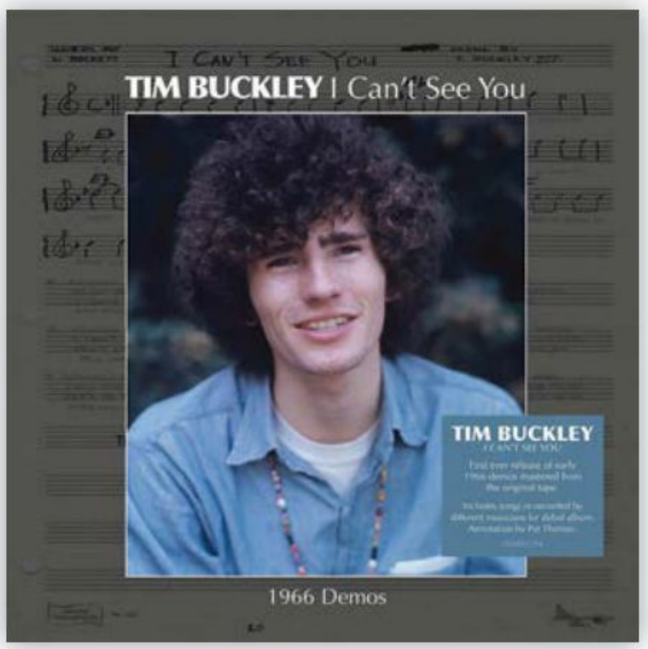
WAITING FOR THE SUN 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

MADFISH

With albums one and two using up the majority of Jim Morrison's original lyrical and conceptual ideas, by third LP *Waiting For The Sun*, The Doors were running somewhat dry. It's a diverse set, though, that has its moments. *Hello, I Love You* scarcely rewrites The Kinks' *All Day And All Of The Night*, but is still a standout here, as is perky ballad *Love Street*. The Vietnam War impacts on the cinematic *The Unknown Soldier* and *Five To One*. Robby Krieger's flamenco stylings on *Spanish Caravan* impress and Doors fans will revel in *Not To Touch The Earth*'s inclusion here, a partial segment of the ambitious multi-part *Celebration Of The Lizard* they struggled to nail in the studio that was originally intended to fill all of Side Two. In this boxset, a 180g version of the album comes with two CDs of rough mixes and live tracks recorded in Copenhagen. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10



Tim Buckley

I CAN'T SEE YOU 1966 DEMOS

DEMON MUSIC

This EP of four previously unreleased demos recorded before Tim Buckley's 1966 debut album offers a fascinating snapshot into the singer's early work with his band The Bohemians before he signed to Elektra. The demos, mastered from the original tape by Bill Inglot and Dan Hersch, are believed to have been captured in 1966, after November 1965's Orange County sessions, but before Buckley's self-titled debut was recorded. That's about as definite as we can be, as the sleevenotes feature a water-muddying interview with Bohemians drummer and co-songwriter Larry Beckett, who identifies the rest of the band by their playing, but throws doubt on whether it's himself behind the kit. What's beyond question here is the undiluted folky brilliance, untainted by hi-fi production, with three of the four songs going on to be recorded by different musicians on the album. *Sixface*, the only track not to make the cut, is a rollicking five-verse delight. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10

WorldMags.net

REVIEWS

The Beta Band
THE THREE E.P.'S – 20TH ANNIVERSARY REMASTER
BECAUSE MUSIC

The first in a staggered series of vinyl reissues covering their too-brief lifespan, it's sad to say *The Three E.P.'s* contains almost everything the casual dabbler needs to hear to realise why The Beta Band inspired such devotion among fans, critics and fellow musicians. This remastered version seems to level out some of the eccentricities of the ambitious production, but you could listen to it through a tin can and still be beguiled by its musical evolution.

Beginning with magisterial Gordon Anderson co-writes *Dry The Rain* and *Dog's Got A Bone* before entering the hazy, lysergic terrain of *Inner Meet Me* and *The House Song* on the way to the introverted, dreamlike *Push It Out* and *Dr. Baker*, few bands have ever crowbarred in so many winning ideas while remaining so accessible. It has overblown moments, of course, but the anthemic psychedelia of *Needles In My Eyes* is the perfect closer to a record which, 20 years on, thoroughly lives up to its reputation as one of the most eclectic, original and beloved creations of its era. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT
9/10

Interpol
MARAUDER
MATADOR

Following 2017's 15th anniversary tour of sublime debut *Turn On The Bright Lights*, Interpol release their sixth album. While that record shimmered enigmatically through the early 21st-century existential gloom, *Marauder* depicts a beefed-up, strident version of the band, with producer Dave Fridmann lending a live, imprecise analogue warmth to the simmering tension. Opener *If You Really Love Nothing* swings seductively before breaking into the slicing eighth-note riff and pounding drums of lead single *The Rover,* Paul Banks thrilling and threatening as he proffers "Come and see me, maybe you'll die". Banks' writing is at its most autobiographical to date throughout, self-analysing on the mesmeric *Stay In Touch*: "Marauder chained of no real code/ Marauder breaks bonds/ Marauder stays long/ Plays with the real face on" and wonderfully on *NYSMAW:* "You're reaching into my heart/ Grinding fists in my soul". Indeed, the writing on *Marauder* is up there with Banks' evocative best, but some fans may long for the dolent gloaming of *Turn On The Bright Lights*. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT
7/10

The Lemon Twigs
GO TO SCHOOL

It wasn't obvious The Lemon Twigs had stops left to pull out after the eccentric excesses of their debut, *Do Hollywood*, but they've located some. Their career's second instalment sees them *Go To School*, but suggests the precocious D'Addario brothers are still too young to understand the horrors the concept album can inflict. They prefer to term it a 'rock musical', but either way, an hour-long collection featuring a chimpanzee called Shane can't help but raise eyebrows, especially when it involves someone wailing "I know how you like your bananas/ Quit with the screeching!" on the time-change-flooded *Rock Dreams*. As ever, Beatles influences are ubiquitous, not least on the brass interlude of *The Bully*, which also offers Queen harmonies, while *Never Know* could be the Liverpudlians' pal Harry Nilsson, albeit strangely glammed up. *Never In My Arms, Always In My Heart*, though, sounds like a lo-fi Suede playing Elton John. Settle down, please...! *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT
7/10

WorldMags.net

James

LIVING IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

BMG RIGHTS

California resident Tim Booth watched Donald Trump's rise with horror, and though some might choose to hide their dissent, he piles in provocatively on his band's 15th album. "White fascists in the White House," he announces on the bitterly distorted *Hank*, adding even more pointed lines, such as "Black lives matter/ Shoot on sight". Not that he's obsessed with the USA's orange embarrassment, as the potent opening trio of tracks underlines. *Coming Home (Pt. 2)* returns to the sound of early hit, *Come Home*, while *Leviathan* advises: "Before they drop the bomb/ Make sure we get enough/ Fucking love". But when not rejecting calls for a border wall on the muted *Many Faces*, there are relentless bursts of rhythmic fury matching thoughtful, sometimes enigmatic, sometimes enraged lyrics, especially on the catchy *Better Than That* and *Extraordinary Times*' huge introduction. *Heads* pulls the fewest punches, though: "Don't believe in the American Dream". Extraordinary times call for extraordinary albums. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

Mark Lanegan & Duke Garwood

WITH ANIMALS

HEAVENLY

Gloomier in tone than 2013's predecessor *Black Pudding*, Duke Garwood once again provides the dark backdrop for Mark Lanegan's solemn prose and velvety vocals on the 12 tracks that make up their second collaboration, *With Animals*. Trippy opener *Save Me* sets the agenda with its pulsating ambient loop, feeding Lanegan's hypnotic: "C'mon now midnight children, sing a dark harmony..." *My Shadow Life* invites the infinite twilight when: "Stars burn out as they hang by a thread", while on *One Way Glass*, Lanegan offers: "Something lonelier than death". *Ghost Stories* develops a haunting atmosphere; *Upon Doing Something Wrong* wallows in its own sublime sorrow; while the eerie whistle weaving through the spectral *Lonesome Infidel* echoes that of *The River Rise* from Lanegan's 1994 sophomore solo album *Whiskey For The Holy Ghost*. Rather than exorcising any ghosts from the past, *Wild Animals* looks forward and breathes new life with its sumptuous American-gothic soundscapes. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

8/10

Oh Sees

SMOTE REVERSER

CASTLE FACE

Shifting between various monikers, John Dwyer has released five albums in the last two years. Moving from the restrained folk-rock of his OCS project to the frenetic garage rock of Thee Oh Sees and now, as Oh Sees, Dwyer pumps out a second album after 2017's *Orc*. The usual high-octane bursts of guitars and pulverising drums are ever-present, but there's a noticeable shift towards things getting a little more prog-rock. There are still big, swampy guitar riffs that are as rooted in glam as they are psychedelia and garage, but the jumping organs, mystical lyrics, giant wig-outs and spiralling guitar parts appear to be further cracking open Dwyer's love of the progressive-rock genre. However, while it's an area that's often been synonymous with bloated self-indulgence, Dwyer manages to retain a pace and sense of exhilaration throughout the record as it hurtles ever forward. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

8/10

WorldMags.net

Kamaal Williams

THE RETURN

BLACK FOCUS

You may know Kamaal Williams for knocking out soulful house under his Henry Wu moniker or for the Gilles Peterson-approved *Black Focus* album of 2016, a collaboration with Yussef Dayes. Williams' jazz-fusion debut under his own name features a crack duo of drummer Joshua McKenzie and bassist Pete Martin. Alongside Williams' own gorgeous Fender Rhodes lead lines, the trio are a perfect balance of song-serving musicianship and scene-stealing soloing. Williams' echoey Rhodes on opener *Salaam* sets a laid-back groove, backed with minimalist bottom end. Drum 'n' bass influences are brought to bear on the urgent stop-start rhythms of *Broken Theme*, and the intriguing, unpredictable beats of *Catch The Loop* will keep you on the edge of your seat. There's a pleasing 80s old-skool R&B vibe to *Rhythm Commission*, which ends far too soon. Overall, it's a winning formula of classic 70s jazz fusion and more modern textures. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

The Internet

HIVE MIND

COLUMBIA RECORDS

Though the phrase 'hive mind' is everywhere nowadays, the phenomenon is sorely lacking. Mob culture's on the rise, and with it the dominance of unruly, unthinking and uncharitable sentiments. Thank God, then, for The Internet – rather than, obviously, the internet – whose members, following solo projects, have reunited for the Grammy-nominated band's fourth album, a blissful, inventive hour of neo-soul distinguished by harmonious single-mindedness. *It Gets Better (With Time)* glides effortlessly between Syd's delicious vocals and Steve Lacy's laidback raps, and *Wanna Be* builds on a nimble guitar riff like a lost Erykah Badu classic. *Bravo*, meanwhile, sounds like Minnie Riperton mumbling peacefully in her sleep, while *Beat Goes On* indulges the group's jazz inclinations. If *Hive Mind* seems backward-looking in terms of inspirations, it still sounds timeless and deliriously dizzy (if relaxed), never more than with *Roll (Burbank Funk)*'s brilliantly simple grind, *La Di Da*'s diaphanous R&B, or the seductive, demure *Stay The Night*. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

Anna Calvi

HUNTER

DOMINO

On her third album, Anna Calvi projects an assured, self-realised voice as she tackles issues of ascribed gender roles and sexual stereotyping head-on. On the sensual, palm-muted *As A Man*, Calvi ponders rhetorical gender questions; the sweeping keyboard pads of *Hunter*, which bears melodic similarities to *Morning Light* from 2011's self-titled debut, find company in fuzzy slide guitar and a Kate Bush-like falsetto; *Don't Beat The Girl Out Of My Boy* confronts the subject of forcing young children to conform to outdated norms, Calvi breaking into a steepling howl at its climax. The virtuosic guitar playing that characterised her debut is often cloaked in effects, with reverb-heavy drums and keyboards played by Portishead's Adrian Utley centre stage; although on the gothic drama of *Indies Or Paradise*, Calvi breaks into a brief hyperbolic divebombing solo, and *Wish* features some superlative playing. Three albums in, Anna Calvi has chosen to follow overtly the maxim of writing what you know, to stunning effect, on a record of high operatic drama and lyrical confidence. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

7/10

WorldMags.net

Her's

INVITATION TO HER'S

HEIST OR HIT

Audun Laading and Stephen Fitzpatrick – aka Her's – have joined an increasingly fertile scene in the historic city of Liverpool. The native home of The Beatles has never played as intrinsic a role in international music culture as it did during the hallowed era of Merseybeat. But now, interestingly enough, this growing scene is being shaped by international culture, with Merseyside seeing musicians coalesce in the city from around the UK and Europe. Laading and Fitzpatrick – from Norway and Barrow respectively – are one of those bands and their debut LP, *Invitation To Her's*, is a joyful, if at times a bit cringeworthy, ode to love via shimmering indie pop. Throughout the 11 tracks, Her's reflect the warm, gossamer sound of Mac DeMarco with guitar melodies that echo Johnny Marr's seminal playing with The Smiths. The pair cite 90s rom-coms as key influences on their music and, at times, that shines through too heavy-handedly. But their ability to write hooks that stick is undeniable and impressive.

Sam Willis

VERDICT

6/10

IDLES

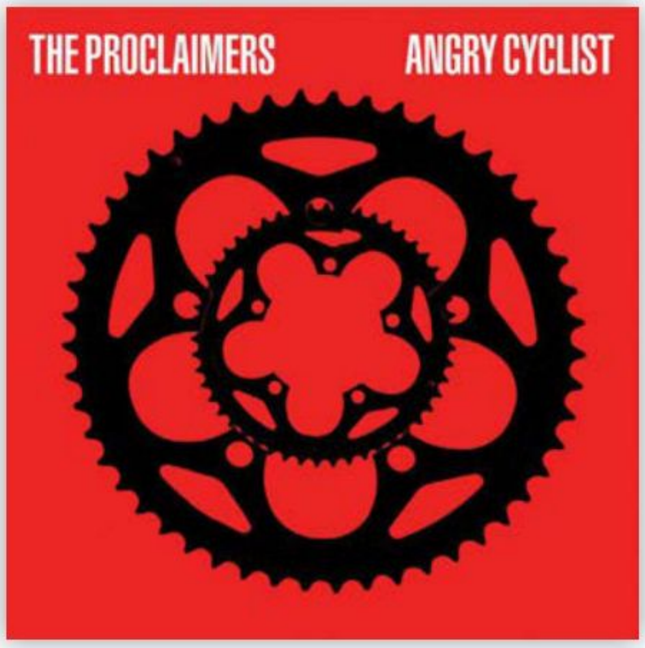
JOY AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

PARTISAN RECORDS

Following on from 2017's sleeper hit album, *Brutalism*, IDLES return with a record laden with familiar targets. Their pro-NHS, pro-immigration, anti-Tory, anti-toxic-masculinity themes remain key – and they blast through these via ferocious guitars and screeching vocals, all at an explosive pace. The biting humour of their debut – backed up by spiky post-punk and crunchy post-hardcore – still remains here (see *I'm Scum*), but it also gives way to a more earnest lyrical exploration. This comes in the form of tracks such as *June*, which explores the tragic loss of lead singer Joe Talbot's daughter. This follow-up is a little lacking in infectious singles compared to their debut, but their intention seems rooted more in decency, vulnerability and offering up the most honest, warts and all versions of themselves that they possibly can. This makes for a heartbreaking, angering, joyous and euphoric record – an emotional explosion. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

VERDICT

8/10



The Proclaimers

ANGRY CYCLIST

COOKING VINYL

If the hallmarks of a good song are lyrics and melodies, you'd be hard pushed to top the latest burst of sunshine from Leith. Delivered in the Reid twins' endearing Scottish burr, *Angry Cyclist* covers an impressive amount of ground with humour, indignation and sage wisdom, all served with their trademark poignancy and good cheer. They don't duck the day's big topics: the succinct title track, a stomper drenched in strings, warns sternly that if we "give ignorance a chance/ With fascists we will dance". *Then It Comes To Me*, a nostalgic, similarly energetic look at how swiftly our lives pass, adds caustically: "I had always laughed at fear of the future/ But then it comes". Nonetheless, *The Battle Of The Booze* offers a fiddle-embellished ode to the pleasures and pitfalls of vodka, and there's a touching, grandiose, string-heavy paean to their home town in *Streets Of Edinburgh*. The twins have peaked again. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

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Various Artists

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF SOUNDS – PSYCHEDELIC & FREAKBEAT MASTERPIECES

UMC

Selected by long-time collector and compiler Phil Smee – the man who coined the term 'freakbeat', no less – here are 14 impossibly rare killer freakbeat and psychedelic sides, presented over seven 45rpm singles, all with authentic reproduction labels and sleeves. Obtaining the original 7"s would take a lifetime to collect and set you back over £10,000. Originally released between 1965 and 1969, the single-sized booklet in the box tells you everything you need to know about these no-hit wonders. Freakbeat fans will delight at the inclusion of Wimple Winch's seminal *Save My Soul*, while other fuzz-drenched mayhem is on offer from The Eyes, The Fleur De Lys and Ronnie Wood's The Birds. Sure, the psych-pop of Tintern Abbey and Kaleidoscope was probably influenced more by a window of opportunity than the doors of perception; nevertheless, the trippy phasing, backwards tapes and Mellotrons offer a brilliant acid-tinged 60s flashback.

John Pickford

VERDICT

9/10

White Denim

PERFORMANCE

CITY SLANG

A decade on from their debut, White Denim are still extracting something new from their rock/funk/soul/pop-hybrid vehicle. The opening *Magazin* struts with a glam-tinged stomp, and it sets the tone for a record that – like, arguably, their whole career – is rooted in plucking the grooves, riffs and rhythms of the 1970s and trying to find a contemporary place for them. The band seem at their most potent when smashing these old and new sounds together in both harmony and discordance. The glam vibe continues with sparkly aplomb on the T. Rex-indebted *It Might Get Dark*, but tracks such as *Backseat Driver* succeed in capturing what the band truly do best: cross-pollinating genres. Stevie Wonder-esque funk, hard-rock riffs, taut grooves and psychedelic guitar licks all combine: the result is a record that sounds like a lost gem, discovered from another era that was perhaps a little too ahead of its time.

Daniel Dylan Wray

VERDICT

8/10

Neil & Liam Finn

LIGHTSLEEPER

PIAS

Father and son Neil and Liam Finn's debut was born of eccentric circumstances: Liam's wedding, during which he was rendered unconscious following riotous festivities which saw him dropped on the ground by guests. The occasion, however, had already provoked Finn Sr. to compose opener *Prelude – Island Of Peace*, a phantasmagorical, shapeshifting tune announcing: "Let love begin!". This sets the tone for a pretty collection that drifts from *Meet Me In The Air* – Air reinterpreting The Beach Boys' *'Til I Die*, from 1971's *Surf's Up* – to *Back To Life*, which echoes Beck and Prince at his more peculiarly funky. *Where's My Room* also combines Beck at his most languid with, inevitably, Crowded House's sweet sensitivity, while adding an unexpected bouzouki solo, and *Anger Plays A Part* could be a drowsy Tom Petty performing an acoustic *I Won't Back Down*. Wilco fans, too, will swoon at the heart-tugging *Hiding Place* and lovely piano ballad, *Listen*.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

8/10

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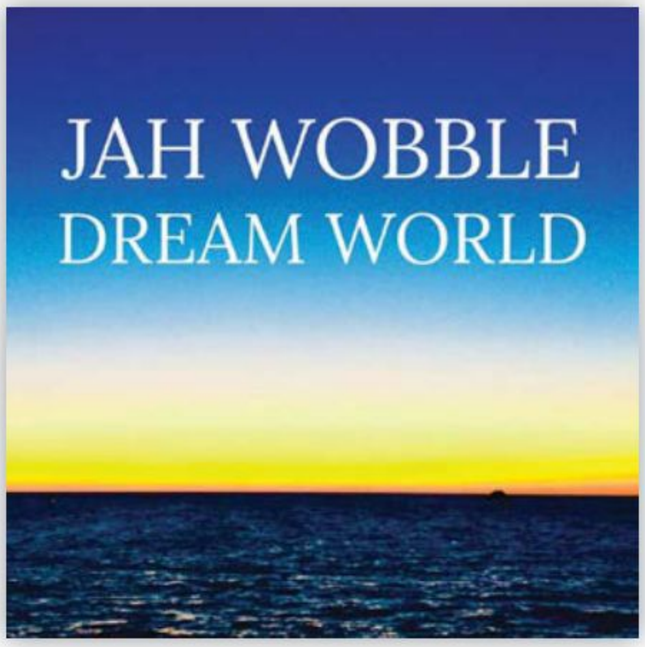
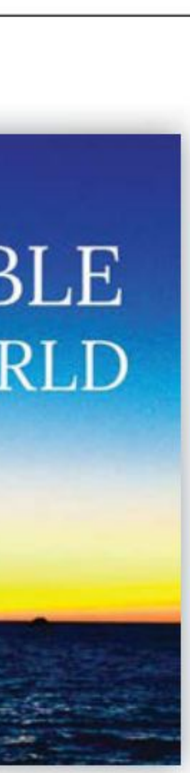


Jah Wobble
DREAM WORLD
JAH WOBBLE RECORDS

The most noteworthy thing about Jah Wobble's latest is how unobtrusive his bass is throughout most of its duration. Sure, there are classy lines underpinning *On Steroids* and the ghostly *Spirits By The Thames*, but for much of this largely solo effort it's underplayed, whether among the Clayderman-esque piano flourishes of *L'autoroute Sans Fin* (which features one of the album's few guest spots, from Invaders Of The Heart keyboardist George King) or the melodica-heavy, rambling *Stepping Hill*. Still, while *Cuban Dub* and *Havana* offer surprises only if you've not read their titles – which is not to downplay the pleasure they offer – *Piquant*'s mix of psychedelic and classical is endearing, and the Chic groove of *A Chunk Of Funk* works up a glossy sweat, adding playful keyboard lines and Cameo-esque vocal chants. It's on *Strange Land*, though, that you'll find the truly heavy sounds of the Wobble dub we love.
Wyndham Wallace

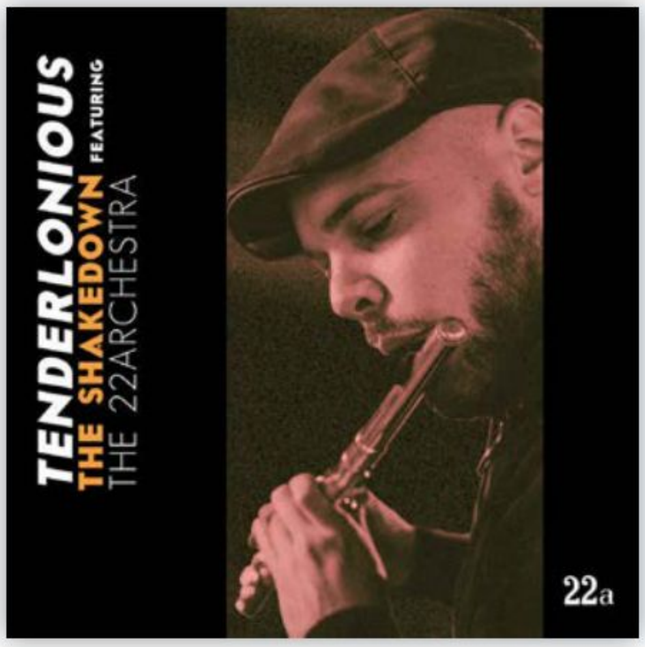
VERDICT
7/10



Hilang Child
YEARS
BELLA UNION

If sensitivity's sorely lacking in the contemporary world, London's Ed Riman is here to put that right. His debut album may be concise, but it's a richly detailed, calming collection whose only real shortcoming is that it's at times almost too subtle for its own good. *Growing Things*, for instance, shimmers and sparkles like The War On Drugs playing 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*, while Riman's expressive voice soars through the dusky *Oh We're Getting Along*. Opener *I Wrote A Letter Home* also boasts an uplifting melody that propels Riman to the top of his vocal range, and *Endless String* opens with piano and hazy vocals, blossoming slowly towards an understated, hymn-like climax. *Starlight, Tender Blue*'s spacious, slightly shoegazey electronica, meanwhile, adds further depth and darkness, and the layered, backward voices of the closing *Ilissohr* provide a placid parting elegy.
Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT
7/10



Tenderlonious Ft. The 22archestra
THE SHAKEDOWN
22A

Now a key figure in London's jazz resurgence, flautist and synth player Tenderlonious (aka Ed Cawthorne) was up against it to put a band together when a gap appeared in the studio timetable at Abbey Road. Hastily assembling the 22archestra (a hat-tip to Sun Ra, and his own record company 22a), *The Shakedown* comes from an improvised eight-hour session in March 2017. Often relaxed and expansive, the under-the-gun genesis of the album doesn't show through in the final nine tracks. Cawthorne's background in drum 'n' bass, hip-hop, grime and dance-oriented jazz informs many of the cuts here. There are Latin flourishes, too, on the summery *Expansions,* and wonderfully tight interplay in the rhythm section on *Yussef's Groove*. Cawthorne's impressive flute work shines on *Maria,* and the ambitious title track is evidence of a cultured musical mind deftly marrying the past, present and future of jazz.
Steve Harnell

VERDICT
7/10

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REVIEWS EXTRA

VARIOUS ARTISTS
CLUB CLASSICS: 50 YEARS OF NORTHERN SOUL
CHARLY RECORDS

This 2LP set featuring 28 Northern Soul floor fillers leads off a series of releases from Charly Records, three of which celebrate legendary venues: *The Scene Club*, *The Twisted Wheel* and *Wigan Casino Soul Club*. With a series of new 7"s also released on the revived imprint, they're essential snapshots of a golden era.

John Butler
THE LOYAL SERPENT
PALO SANTO

A first release on vinyl for this 1997 solo album by the Diesel Park West singer and guitarist from Dallas label Palo Santo. This remastered 2LP gatefold edition features three bonus tracks not on the original album. Endlessly anthemic, there's a clear lineage from the1960s, through jangly Byrdsy guitars and some excellent Arthur Lee-like songwriting.

Delgres
MO JODI
PIAS

Frontman Pascal Danaë, drummer Baptiste Brondy and sousaphone player Rafgee are Guadeloupe blues trio Delgres. A melting pot of French and Caribbean music and Black Keys-like garage blues, *Mo Jodi* was inspired by Louis Delgrès, an instrumental figure in the fight against colonial slavery. Filthy slide guitar collides with Caribbean rhythms and a powerful message to tremendous effect.

Villagers
THE ART OF PRETENDING TO SWIM
DOMINO

Double Ivor Novello Award winner Conor O'Brien returns with a self-produced fourth studio album that's as ambitious as anything he's done before. Articulating hope and fear in a dystopian technologically invasive age, it recalls the multi-faceted approach of 2010 debut *Becoming A Jackal* and 2013's *Awayland*. Pre-order versions of the album come with an exclusive 10".

BC Camplight
DEPORTATION BLUES
BELLA UNION

Pianist, singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Brian 'BC Camplight' Christinzio has had an extremely bad time of late, and it shows in this spectacularly restless second outing for Bella Union. A frantic listen, shot through with idiosyncratic pop nous and masterful playing, it'll reward anyone brave enough to follow him down the rabbit hole.

Tunng
SONGS YOU MAKE AT NIGHT
FULL TIME HOBBY

The original Tunng line-up reconvenes after a series of side projects for an album that is a becalming summer treat. Sam Genders' hushed Derbyshire vocals on second single *Crow* and the lazy synthy shuffle and tumbling piano motifs of *ABOP* are evidence that the folktronica pioneers' sixth LP is among their best work to date.

Jonathan Jeremiah
GOOD DAY
PIAS

This fourth album from Londoner Jonathan Jeremiah is blessed with a laconic summertime groove. Evoking Richie Havens, Scott Walker and James Taylor, *Good Day*'s 11 songs showcase some finely crafted writing, with a 19-piece string and horn section deftly arranged by The Heritage Orchestra's Ben Trigg.

Big Red Machine
BIG RED MACHINE
JAGJAGUWAR

Over the past two years, Bon Iver's Justin Vernon and The National's Aaron Dessner have somehow found time away from their day jobs to put together their first record as Big Red Machine, along with regular collaborator Brad Cook. The result is a gentle soulful treasure, Vernon's vocoder-tinged singing partnered beautifully by skittering beats and Dessner's subtle guitar interjections.

Resina
TRACES
FATCAT

Polish cellist Karolina Rec uses a looper to capture expressive, intricately layered instrumental fragments – ranging from angelic melodies to unsettling shards to discordant chaos – and embellishes them with haunting, wordless vocals and propulsive rhythm. Her detailed explorations follow their own logic, glinting away in an unexplored hinterland between classical and modern.

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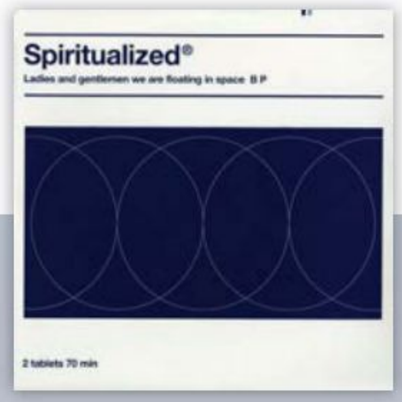
Genre Hopping

Cosmic minimalism

Chris Parkin leaves the hypno-rock orbit of Spacemen 3 in search of undersea civilisations, narco-kosmische paradises and outlying planets with rarefied, droning atmospheres…



As Jason Pierce returns with another sweetly elegiac and gospel-tinged album of narcotic balladry as Spiritualized, it's perhaps worth remembering how he sounded in another lifetime, when he was better known as J. Spaceman – orchestrator of psychedelic noise, first with Spacemen 3 in the 80s and 90s, and then on his earliest Spiritualized albums.

Underlining just where Pierce has arrived from is Spacemen 3's recently reissued and beefed-up *Dreamweapon: An Evening Of Contemporary Sitar Music* 'album'. It's not a jumping-in point for newcomers to Spacemen 3, but it is one of the purest distillations of a band at their most repetitively and meditatively hypnotic.

Recorded live at Watermans Arts Centre in Brentford in 1988, the record captures Spacemen 3 performing a 45-minute one-note jam of sitar-y-sounding drone – only without the billed sitar – to a crowd queuing up for the cinema. So locked into the groove (or bombed) were they that bass player Will Carruthers forgot to turn on his bass amp. But for all their naïvety, it's still a mesmerising listen, with original copies commanding huge fees on Discogs.

After Spacemen 3 disbanded, J. Spaceman took a less-tortuous route to mainstream success with Spiritualized, leaving the opiated sound experiments to his partner (and rival) Pete Kember (or Sonic Boom, as his mum still called him in the 2000s). His early-90s output is full of essentials for fans of this sort of thing, but it's his 1994 album as Spectrum, *Highs, Lows And Heavenly Blows*, that remains his best work – a pulsing, honey-kissed and dawn-lit drone opus. Reissued in the US by Medical Records earlier this year, it's finally set for a UK reissue at the end of August on Music On Vinyl.

> ON THIS 45-MINUTE, ONE-NOTE LIVE JAM, THEY WERE SO LOCKED INTO THE GROOVE (OR BOMBED) THAT BASSIST WILL CARRUTHERS FORGOT TO TURN ON HIS BASS AMP

Kember is still active, of course. MGMT, Animal Collective and Beach House have all benefitted from his production skills, and his own latest effort is *Infinite Music: A Tribute To La Monte Young* – a celebration of the cyclical never-ending drone music espoused by the US pioneer of experimental minimalism, and a huge inspiration on *Dreamweapon*. Recorded live in Lisbon last year with Gallic synth nut Etienne Jaumet and Céline Wadier, a student of Indian Dhrupad singing and the tanpura stringed instrument, the album's three tracks – pressed onto magenta vinyl by Fire Records – do exactly what you'd expect them to.

Pitching up somewhere between Pierce's present sound and Kember's search for narco-kosmische paradise, but dipped in the clear-flowing waters of bucolic Americana, is William Sol's album, *Enter The Stream*, as Prana Crafter. Released in the UK by Cardinal Fuzz, it's an album of cosmic acid-folk by way of 70s Krautrock and owes as much to Neil Young and Elliott Smith as it does Popol Vuh.

Sounding completely different again, but on a similarly blissed-out plane, is the limited and beautifully presented split album, *The Encyclopedia Of Civilizations Vol. 2: Atlantis*, by Bitchin Bajas and DSR Lines on Spain's Abstrakce Records. Like Kember, both display a love of deep synth music and minimalism, as they perform an odyssey inspired by the city of Atlantis. ●

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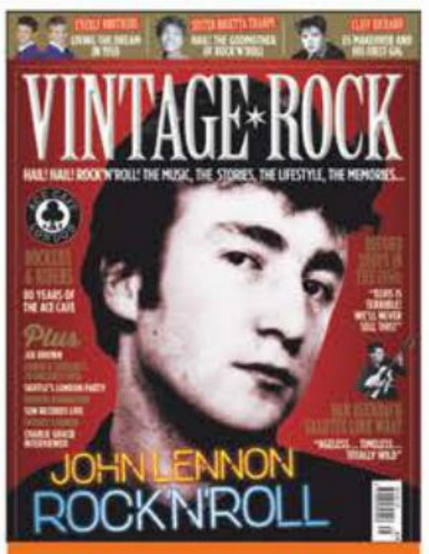

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HOW TO BUY MID-RANGE TURNTABLES

Ready to upgrade your turntable? **Paul Rigby** offers some handy buying advice in the mid-range realm, focusing on tried-and-trusted designs as well as quirky models

Turntables that sit within a mid-range price point can be a bit of an oddity; partly because it's the price-point extremities that receive the most attention. We talk a lot about getting into vinyl with the aid of a budget deck – and we seek value for money from the same. Then, at the other end of the price spectrum, we slaver over super-turntable designs that promise audio nirvana with the help of bigger budgets and more freedom of ideas. The only limits imposed on the latter seem to be those of the designers' talents. Sitting between these two extremes is the mid-range sector.

This class of turntable can be deceptive – because manufacturers here have to achieve a delicate balance. So, while the build budget for a mid-range turntable is increased to allow better-quality parts to be used and

Pro-Ject's Classic SB Superpack comes with an arm, cartridge, clamp, cables and a speed-change control

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greater innovation to be implemented, you still can't be too profligate, and it's important to prioritise the major areas to secure high-quality sound. Then again, you can't be too conservative in your approach, either, because the user has the right to reserve a certain level of expectation. After all, if you're spending £3,000 on a turntable, then you want to be 'wowed'. At least just a little bit… In short, building a quality mid-range turntable is not as easy as you might think.

BUNDLES

You might believe that bundling disparate turntable accessories into a single package is the domain of the cheap-and-cheerful budget arena, but that's just not so. The same is often done with mid-range turntables. The difference here, of course, is that the bundled accessories tend to be more high-end and, on the whole, more useful – but also wider ranging.

Wider ranging? Yes, because we're entering more refined territory here. Don't assume that your turntable will be sold with a tonearm neatly fitted – many are not. The choice of tonearms is wider in this sector, because third-party tonearm manufacturers are especially active here. It might even be a good idea to buy a turntable, but then hunt around for a tonearm from a different brand to fully maximise the designs of both.

Hence, including a tonearm with a turntable is a 'bigger deal' than a free arm attached to a budget deck. The same can be said of the cartridge.

Hence, the mid-range 'bundle' might be a 'default' package, in terms of the budget allotted to it. Mid-range bundles can go further, with the addition of higher-end phono cartridges, clamps and stabilisers.

VETERAN DESIGNS

Because the bigger budget means more attention to detail can be applied to mid-range turntables (though there are exceptions), they will often last longer in terms of competitive performance than a budget design. This means many of the mid-range options selected here were launched years – even decades – ago, but remain worthy of attention.

A brand-new turntable is not always the way to go. More than that, successful older designs already have a great service-support operation in place, which, on the whole, tends to mean a longer lifespan for your beloved music source.

BECAUSE THE BIGGER BUDGET MEANS MORE ATTENTION TO DETAIL CAN BE APPLIED TO MID-RANGE TURNTABLES (THOUGH THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS), THEY WILL OFTEN LAST LONGER IN TERMS OF COMPETITIVE PERFORMANCE THAN A BUDGET DESIGN

QUIRKS

One of the joys of a larger build budget is the freedom given to the turntable designer to spread their wings with the final product. The result of this might reside purely in the aesthetics of the plinth, for example – something that exists primarily to catch the eye. Other features might be tied to ease of use and installation, providing the user with a smoother, no-hassle experience. There are designers out there, of course, who

Michell's TecnoDec is a highly regarded mid-range stalwart

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might wish to implement intriguing ideas that are aimed at enhancing the sound quality from the turntable. Not all of these 'advances' are worthy of the name, but all tend to be of interest and worthy of investigation. Some result in a turntable that might hit the mark for a specific music genre, for example: meaty bass for rock music, fragility for classical compositions, midrange insight for jazz and the like. Others may hit all these spots at once, advancing the basic design of the mid-range turntable.

THINGS WORK

Call it science or call it cash, but within this price band, certain technologies tend to work properly and expansively. That is, there are certain approaches to turntable design that don't hit the mark in the budget arena. For example, a cheap and cheerful direct-drive deck can be fun to use as a budget turntable, and can provide the ear with a lively performance, full of impact and bass presence; but the technology matures and truly comes to life when properly engineered and implemented as a mid-range design.

It's only at this point that you realise that direct-drive technology is not all about sonic style over substance, and that the direct-drive approach offers a true alternative to the belt-drive design approach that currently dominates the market. The direct-drive issue is but one example; in the realm of mid-range turntables, there are many more.

Roksan's Radius 7 is a futuristic design that incorporates high-end tech

MID-RANGE TURNTABLE BUYER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Which mid-range turntable should you buy? Here are some of our top choices in three different categories. This is just a brief list of recommendations and is not exhaustive. There are lots of others that We've not been able to include, due to space reasons. Why not write in and tell us about your favourites, so that other readers can be made aware of those, too? ●

LITTLE EXTRAS UP TO £2,000

Turntables that bundle extra features into a value package

PRO-JECT
CLASSIC SB SUPERPACK

PRICE £1,399

WWW.HENLEYAUDIO.CO.UK

This popular three-speed, belt-drive, manual turntable features a 9" carbon-fibre arm, Ortofon Quintet Red moving-coil cartridge, clamp, enhanced phono cables, plus integrated speed controller that provides start/stop and speed-change control. The Classic SB provides a great overall sound, with significant bass impact.

VPI
PLAYER

PRICE £1,500

WWW.RENAISSANCEAUDIO.CO.UK

The VPI Player offers a built-in phono amplifier, a built-in headphone amplifier and a tonearm replete with a stainless-steel tube and an Ortofon 2M Red cartridge. Some may view the Player as more of a lifestyle design than an audiophile turntable per se, but it offers excellent value for money and a true sense of refinement that provides a broad appeal.

EAT
C-MAJOR SUPER PACK

PRICE £1,998

WWW.ABSOLUTESOUNDS.COM

EAT boss Jozefina Lichtenegger is married to Pro-Ject founder Heinz Lichtenegger, but the brands are wholly separate in design and execution. This so-called 'super pack' includes an Ortofon MC Quintet Blue cartridge. It needs a quality stabiliser and platter mat to reveal precision and sonic balance.

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VENERABLE DESIGNS £700-£3,000

Older models that still pack a punch and provide value today

MICHELL TECNODEC

PRICE £775 (BASIC TURNTABLE WITH NO ARM) MICHELL TECNOARM, £600 OR REGA RB202 TONEARM, £199)

WWW.MICHELL-ENGINEERING.CO.UK

It might be 14 years old, but the only 'old-fashioned' element of this deck is its quality engineering – and that's a good thing. The TecnoDec offers slightly lively upper mids, but plenty of balanced detail elsewhere. Also, Michell offers a superb support service – the kind that can only be provided by a small company.

THORENS TD 309

PRICE £1,229

WWW.UKD.CO.UK

The TD 309's plinth is a textbook study in aesthetics – which helps the turntable stand apart from the competition on this basis, at least. The tonearm is an aluminium TP 92 with an AT95E moving-magnet cartridge installed on the end. It features an excellent suspension system, too. There's plenty of sonic life and sparkle here.

TECHNICS SL-1200G

PRICE £2,999

WWW.TECHNICS.COM/UK

This is, in effect, sold as a 'starter kit', that you can tweak and enhance with third-party extras to create the best direct-drive turntable in its class. The SL-1200G offers superb inherent engineering and build quality with – once enhanced – midrange insight, bass impact and ease of use.

DESIGN INNOVATION £1,600-£3,300

Designs that combine quirky features and solid audiophile engineering

AVID INGENIUM

PRICE £1,650

WWW.AVIDHIFI.CO.UK

Featuring a Pro-Ject 9cc carbon tonearm, the design is an impressive one, although you'll need to add a cartridge. Both in terms of the quality engineering and the company's philosophy, the Ingenium is basically a highly simplified derivation of the superlative, top-of-the-range, £10,000 Acutus deck.

CLEARAUDIO PERFORMANCE DC

PRICE £3,240

CLEARAUDIO.DE/EN

The Performance DC features a rather quirky Clarify tonearm, plus a Virtuoso cartridge as a value package, but get past that and you'll find a great build, plus incisive treble and spacious midrange performance – along with an impressive instrumental separation. It's worth upgrading the cartridge to enhance performance.

ROKSAN RADIUS 7

PRICE £2,500

WWW.ROKSAN.CO.UK

The Radius 7's featureset includes a motor assembly that utilises an electronic speed selection that has been sourced from the company's top-of-the-range Xerxes. A connected LED light shines blue for 33rpm or red for 45rpm, which is more effective as a lightshow because of that high density, glass-like plinth. Sonically, the Radius 7 delivers an impressively open presentation with plenty of focus.

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DREAM MACHINES

SME SYNERGY

£14,950 *www.sme.co.uk*

In our series showcasing high-end hi-fi to die for, **Paul Rigby** checks out an integrated belt-drive turntable that's ready and waiting to deliver superior sonics, straight off the shelf…

The Synergy is a stunning new turntable design from British company SME, in collaboration with leading audio specialists. It combines the legendary SME Series IV tonearm, Ortofon's excellent MC Windfeld Ti cartridge and a phono stage by respected hi-fi business Nagra – all coupled with silver wire by Crystal Cable. Synergy's chassis is machined from 'aerospace' aluminium and supported on four large polymer isolators inside adjustable feet, which allow for levelling while enhancing sound quality through isolation. It's an attractive all-in-one solution, which doesn't compromise audiophile necessities.

1 ALLOY THERE
Machined from aluminium alloy and weighing over 4.6kg, Synergy's platter is dampened with a bespoke Isodamp material

2 CHROME ALONE
A chrome-plated clamp is included with the Synergy

3 ARMED AND DANGEROUS
Based on the SME Series IV, the tonearm uses the same one-piece pressure die-cast magnesium arm tube. Internal wiring is supplied by Crystal Cable

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AVID DIVA II SP

TWIN-BELT TURNTABLE WITH DSP VARI-SPEED SUPPLY

£3,300 www.avidhifi.co.uk

Avid update their award-winning turntable model, adding an extra belt, an improved platter and more. But is this Diva ready to perform, or is she too high-maintenance? **Paul Rigby** finds out…

Avid has a growing reputation for covering all the hi-fi bases, with phono amplifiers, speakers and more, but the company began as a specialist turntable designer. This Diva II SP is part of that core tradition, featuring trickle-down technology from Avid's high-end Acutus deck.

One consistent quality with Avid turntables is that they are built solidly. You know you're getting value for money with an Avid. Nothing feels wobbly or fragile, or looks as though it will break off if breathed on too hard.

The Diva II SP, weighing in at 12.8kg, is an upgrade on the older Diva II release (although at first glance, they look very similar). Yet, the SP variant features a host of upgrades, such as a twin-belt drive instead of the original single belt. The twin-belt system does enhance speed stability, but it can be a little fiddly to apply during initial installation. One side of the belt runs around the pulley, which is hidden under the platter, while the other end fits on a smaller circular area under the platter. Fitting the belt requires blind juggling; you tend to do it by 'feel'. A pin gizmo is included to aid the process, but I wasn't enamoured with it. The belt-fitting issue sounds worse than it really is, though. It might be finicky, but you get the hang of it pretty quickly.

NEW AND IMPROVED

A 6.3kg metal platter is featured, rather than the MDF of the standard Diva II, plus a high-quality tungsten carbide/sapphire bearing assembly taken from more expensive models. Triple-layer three-point elastomer suspension reduces inherent veiling noise and a new frequency-adjustable power supply is also included, which the company sees as more stable than a DC option.

The DSP Vari-Speed supply uses Digital Signal Processing for signal generation and control. As you can see from the accompanying images, it sits inside a small metal box that is separate from the turntable itself. This is generally a 'good thing'. Positioning the supply

Motor noise is improved on the Diva II SP

The Diva II SP's self-lubricating bearing system helps reduce vibration

from the actual turntable cuts down on damaging vibrations and veiling noise, which will always threaten to reduce sound quality.

On the front of the supply's narrow chassis are a power switch and two speed buttons. One starts and stops the platter and the other changes the speed, which is rock-solid in use. Pressing and holding both buttons regulates the speed. Once done, you double-press again, to 'save' the adjusted speed to memory.

I fit a high-end SME Series IV arm to the Diva II SP to see how far I can push the turntable design and add a Nagaoka MP-150 MM cartridge (£350), then a Benz Glider moving coil (£900) and, finally, a Koetsu Black (£2,000) to find out whether the Diva can handle the increasing quality. I play a slice of *Low*-era David Bowie, plus vocal jazz from Eydie Gormé and find that the Diva takes the lot easily in its stride, gaining in maturity and confidence as each cartridge is swapped into the system. Saying that, midrange insight and a sense of discipline over all frequencies occurs from the off, as does the instrumental separation, which helps infuse air into the soundstage, producing a relaxed audio presentation. These effects are improved and enhanced with every cartridge upgrade.

MIDRANGE INSIGHT AND A SENSE OF DISCIPLINE OVER ALL FREQUENCIES OCCUR FROM THE OFF, AS DOES INSTRUMENTAL SEPARATION

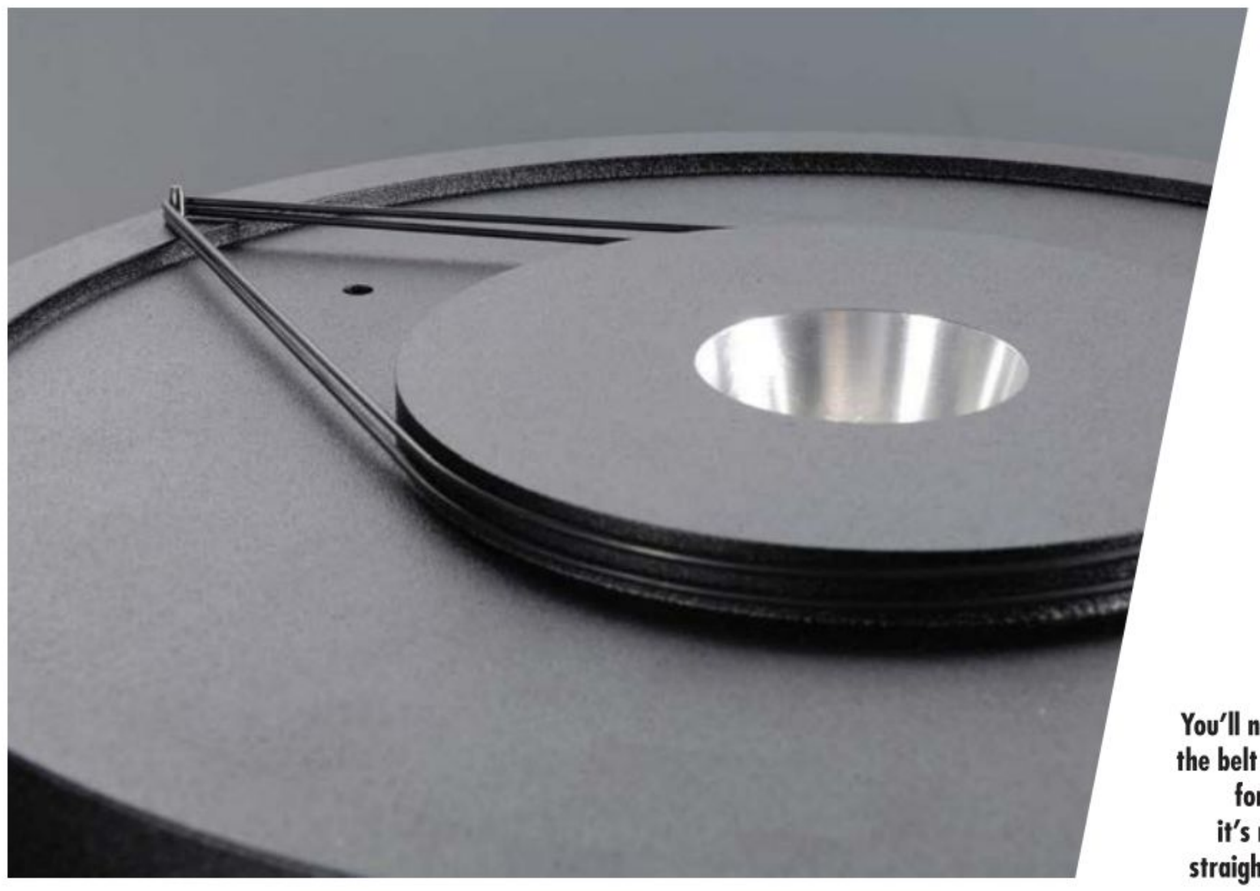
My first conclusion is just how well the Diva II SP responds to a well-chosen tonearm and cartridge upgrade. It shows itself to be a solid and reliable analogue platform. Grab yourself a Diva II SP and you may very well stick with it for life: just improve it gradually with better tonearms and cartridges to reach new sonic heights.

The more specific bottom line is that this turntable is well behaved, handling all frequencies responsibly and without any unruly sonics getting in the way of the music. More than that, though, the Diva II SP offers midrange insight to delight, combined with an infusion of air and space to enhance instrumental separation, and a balanced mix enabling well-formed bass to provide a firm and pacy foundation. In short, this turntable gives you great sound at an equally great price. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
BUILD QUALITY	NOTHING
MIDRANGE DETAIL	
INSTRUMENTAL SEPARATION	
MATURE BASS	

SCORE
30/33⅓



You'll need to fit the belt yourself; fortunately, it's relatively straightforward

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GOLD NOTE MEDITERRANEO

HIGH-END TURNTABLE WITH B-7 CERAMIC TONEARM

£6,008 *www.goldnote.it, www.audiopinnacle.co.uk 01420 544140*

Paul Rigby reviews a stylish Italian-made two-speed belt-driven turntable with a classy-looking aged Italian walnut lower plinth, designed to reduce turbulence and aid sonic stability…

Right from the off, you notice it: that wavy lower plinth made out of walnut. This one feature provides a clue to the intriguing design qualities of this turntable and also the care and thought applied to its construction.

I asked Gold Note about the wooden plinth element and they admitted that there are pros and cons to working with aged Italian walnut: "It's very difficult to work with and it takes an extremely talented and skilled craftsman to create unusual shapes, like the one we need," said a spokesperson. The upsides apparently outweigh the difficulties, though: "The Italian walnut used on the Mediterraneo is extremely dense, but highly dampening at the same time. So when you feel the weight of the deck, you know that it comes mostly from the lower plinth. So, basically, it provides stability, insulation and rigidity to the turntable on its own."

This sort of thoughtful application is seen all over the Mediterraneo: a two-speed, belt-driven beauty spanning 470x210x 360mm and weighing in at 25kg.

The power supply consists of a simple switch-mode block, plugged into the rear of the plinth which, at first glance, looks rather dubious: but this diminutive power supply is all that the turntable needs… in fact, it's actually too much. Six times too much, to be precise, because the motor is "frictionless".

The top of the plinth features the speed selectors, while the platter is made from a dense Sustarin polymer material. The bearing includes a 5mm tungsten ball bearing with adjustable brass seat, in a polished bronze case.

Oddly, you place the platter on top of the bearing during installation, then the central spindle – a separate item known as a Split-Spindle – is speared through the centre of the platter and screwed into the bearing beneath, adding to the rigidity of the rotating system and offering better alignment, while avoiding unwanted oscillations.

In terms of cables, the tonearm is connected via a small DIN plug. "We adopted the standard DIN, as it is the 'real' DIN and, in our opinion, it sounds the best," say Gold Note. "We use only Hirschmann connectors made in Austria."

A dust cover is included, and easily removed using slide on/off hinge

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IN GENERAL TERMS, IN OUR LISTENING TEST, EYDIE GORMÉ'S VOCAL IS FULL OF BREATHY EMOTION AND DRAMATIC CRESCENDOS, WHILE REMAINING BEAUTIFULLY CLEAR AND SWEEPING

With its lower plinth made out of aged Italian walnut, the Mediterraneo lives up to its name

brackets. The included 9" B-7 Ceramic tonearm features a moulded headshell that includes a built-in finger lift. This is awkward to use and designed poorly for a secure finger position – the one speck of dust on this fine turntable design. The arm also includes four ball bearings, supplied by the German outfit GRW. Including a 10g mass with adjustable azimuth and VTA, and a wire-based anti-skate, the tonearm's tube is titanium-based, while the internal wiring is AWG36 Hyper Litz shielded 99.9999% OFC. A stainless-steel counterweight is included, but different-sized weights can be supplied, if required.

I play a mixture of rock from David Bowie (*Low*) and jazz vocal from Eydie Gormé. Fitting a Koetsu Black cartridge, the turntable shows a good basic discipline, with no bright mids or muddy bass. In fact, the bass is honed and never shows any excess fat. This helps the pace of the music to skip along without any dragging.

On the original pressing of Gormé's *With All My Heart* and the track, *Don't Worry 'Bout Me*, I notice that the included stabiliser veils the mids a touch. A replacement third-party HRS ADH adds a sense of grandeur to the music. The result is new-found space, air and instrumental separation, plus boosted bass power and reverb tails on the ride cymbals. If you buy the Gold Note, replace that stabiliser. In our listening test, Gormé's vocal is full of breathy emotion and dramatic crescendos, while remaining beautifully clear and sweeping.

The Mediterraneo comes with a 9" B-7 Ceramic tonearm

CONCLUSION

The Mediterraneo offers a mature sonic approach, promoting confidence and always sounding controlled. A stylish and slightly quirky design, Gold Note have taken an aesthetic approach that will appeal to many traditionalists in terms of its style and form, but the Mediterraneo also impresses in terms of sound quality. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
SOUNDSTAGE	STABILISER
MIDRANGE DETAIL	FINGER LIFT
BASS PRECISION	
QUIRKY STYLE	
SOLID BUILD	

SCORE
30/33⅓

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AUDIO-TECHNICA
ATH-ADX5000
AUDIOPHILE HEADPHONES

£1,990 *www.audio-technica.com*

John Pickford finds out whether these aerodynamically designed open-back 'phones heighten the listening experience

For many audiophiles, headphone listening is a serious business, and on test here is a serious set of headphones. Audio-Technica's ATH-ADX5000 is the company's new flagship model and when they claim they're "a new reference in home listening", they aren't kidding; they haven't been designed to plug into your phone. As you might expect from headphones priced just shy of two grand, the ADX5000s are built and finished beautifully and come housed in their own bespoke briefcase.

AT have developed new Core Mount Technology, improving airflow efficiency to ensure true full-range performance, while the honeycomb-punched housing further improves efficiency, with closed sides to avoid loss of air pressure. The 58mm driver is an integrated design, combining the tungsten-coated diaphragm, voice coil, PPS/glass-fibre baffle and permendur magnetic circuit. The earpads are covered with Alcantara, which is both luxuriously soft and durable. The frame and arms are constructed solidly from magnesium, ensuring rigidity while remaining lightweight.

WILD STYLE

The three-metre cable features an attractively sculpted gold-plated stereo jack plug (6.3mm), though the input connectors are specific to the headphones rather than standard mini-jacks. A balanced cable will soon be available, at £290. Although the ADX5000s have a large circumaural design, their super-light weight of 270g makes them extremely comfortable, with no sense of being closed in.

Unlike many noise-cancelling designs, though, the ATs will not isolate you from extraneous noise – and their sound leakage is on the high side.

Plugging into my reference Naim HeadLine amplifier and listening to a handful of test tracks, I was struck immediately by the dizzying amount of detail on offer. With a light, spacious and open sound, it can seem at first as if they're a little bass-shy; however, that's because there's an absence of the mid-bass hype common in many less accurate designs. As soon as real bass is presented on recordings, the ATs deliver it with authority.

While the low-end response of the ADX5000s is both deep and clean, it's the broad midrange – where instruments and voices compete for space – that marks these headphones out as special. While some designs major on speed and timing at the expense of timbral accuracy, and others have superb tonal quality but can be a tad laid-back, the ATs are both tonally accurate and have excellent pace, rhythm and timing.

Playing Lou Reed's *Walk On The Wild Side*, the stereo acoustic guitars and brushed drums had real rhythmic alacrity, while Herbie Flowers' double-tracked acoustic and electric bass underpinned the bass drum, each occupying its own distinct space in the lower registers. Reed's lead vocal had a new-found intimacy, while the backing singers emerging from reverb were eerily present. This forensic detail can be distracting at times, however. The opening bass riff of *So What* from Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue* was in danger of being obscured by the tape hiss on this ancient analogue recording.

Audio-Technica's new flagship headphones are brilliant performers, up with the very best on the market today. Any criticism of their sound ultimately comes down to personal preference. Those who prefer a warm, cosy presentation may find the ADX5000s too explicit and unforgiving of poor recordings. Discerning listeners of well-recorded music replayed on a great turntable through a top-end headphone amp will delight in their sprightly clarity. ●

VERDICT

PROS

- SUPERB TIMBRAL ACCURACY
- EXPLICIT DETAIL AND CLARITY
- PACE, RHYTHM AND TIMING
- STEREO SOUNDSTAGING

CONS

- SLIGHTLY COOL PRESENTATION
- RECORDING-QUALITY DEPENDENT

SCORE
30/33⅓

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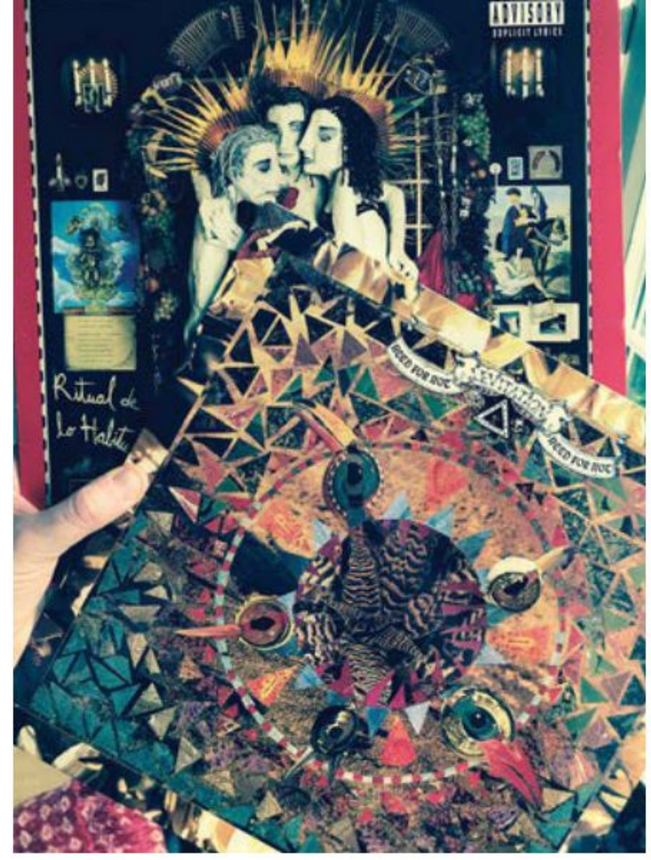

Like many a "90s kid", reader **Steve Fletcher** began collecting the black stuff in earnest in the 2000s – and has been making up for lost time ever since, expanding out from classic rock via explorations into grunge, US alt-rock and instrumental guitar…

What was the first record you bought?
"I only really started buying vinyl in the early 2000s. Before then, it was all CDs and I have quite a few of those. But if memory serves, the first record I bought was *Flying In A Blue Dream* by Joe Satriani. I remember listening to a dodgy copy my brother had on tape and being blown away by the guitar work. I had to have it on wax. Still one of the best solo guitar albums to date…"

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"I listen to a lot of music, on vinyl and hi-res download/streaming services for mobility. I tend to go for anything edgy and original; nothing particularly mainstream. I'm a 90s kid, so mainly classic and alternative rock, in its many forms – from Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones, Beatles and Aerosmith to lots of grunge and all the side projects, Soundgarden, Jane's Addiction and Faith No More. I love finding LPs by bands from that era that were completely overlooked, too; like *Chasm* by The Beyond. That had me very excited recently."

How many records do you have?
"The collection is growing by the week. It tends to be what I spend the disposable on, much to the disgruntlement of Mrs Fletcher. I like to dig out the second-hand originals rather than invest too much in the newer releases (they seem to feel and sound better), but I reckon I have about 2,000 spread about the place by now. If money was no object, I'd have many more…"

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"Personally, or financially? Ha! *Superunknown*, *Chasm* by The Beyond or *Brave* by Marillion are personally treasured. Financially, I don't think I have many worth vast sums of money, but I think a limited-edition release of the debut QOTSA album is worth around £300 now. Nice artwork, too!"

What's the Holy Grail record that you'd most like to own?
"I used to dream about owning particular albums on vinyl. Sad, I know. *Brave* by Marillion haunted me, in particular… I'm really hankering for *EDC* by Satchel. An amazing album from '94, completely overlooked, that never seems to have been released on vinyl. Or *Dig* by I Mother Earth. Another hidden gem."

What's your listening setup?
"It's not optimal yet, but I'm running from a Pro-Ject turntable and preamp, through a Marantz amp and a pair of Monitor Audio Bronze 2s. I was recently supplied coils of AudioQuest cable that's really enhanced the sound, but I hope to move from budget to mid-range kit at some point. If money was no object…" ●

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